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OF

POLITICAL ECONOMY.

BY 27574 ac

HARRIET MARTINEAU.

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DEMERARA.

ELLA OF GARVELOCH.

WEAL AND WOE IN GARVELOCH.

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IN NINE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

—o—

LONDON:

CHARLES FOX, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

MDCCCXXXIV.

27574

LONDON:
Printed by WILLIAM CLOWES,
Duke-street, Lambeth.

CONTENTS.

DEMERARA.

CHAP.		PAGE
1.	Sunrise brings Sorrow in Demerara .	1
2.	Law endangers Property in Demerara	14
3.	Prosperity impoverishes in Demerara	28
4.	Childhood is Wintry in Demerara . .	45
5.	No haste to the Wedding in Demerara	58
6.	Man worth less than Beast in Demerara	64
7.	Christianity difficult in Demerara . .	81
8.	The Proud covet Pauperism in Demerara	93
9.	Calamity welcome in Demerara . . .	103
10.	Protection is Oppression in Demerara .	113
11.	Beasts hunt Men in Demerara . . .	123
12.	No Master knows his Man in Demerara .	129

ELLA OF GARVELOCH.

1.	Landlord and Tenant	1
2.	A Highland Farm .	18
3.	The first Excursion	34
4.	Whom have we here?	44
5.	A Highland Night .	55
6.	The Scotch abroad	67
7.	Innovations . .	81
8.	Seclusion not Peace	94
9.	A Fool's Errand .	111
10.	What is to happen next?	116
11.	Understand before you complain . .	123
12.	A waking Dream .	132

WEAL AND WOE IN GARVELOCH.

1.	Times are changed	1
2.	Neighbourly chat .	17
3.	Kindred not kindness	27
4.	Looking before and after	38
5.	More haste than good speed	51
6.	A dreary prospect .	67
7.	The discipline of the Teachable . . .	83
8.	The discipline of the Unteachable . .	105
9.	Troubles never come alone	121
10.	Conclusion . . .	133

DEMERARA.

Chapter I.

SUNRISE BRINGS SORROW IN DEMERARA.

The winter of the tropics is the most delicious of all seasons of any climate to inhabitants of the temperate zone. The autumnal deluge is over: there is no further apprehension of hurricanes for many months: the storms of hail are driven far southwards by the steady north winds, which spread coolness and refreshment among the groves and over the plains. The sea, whose rough and heavy swell seemed but lately to threaten to swallow up the island and desolate the coasts, now spreads as blue as the heavens themselves, and kisses the silent shore. Inland, the woods are as leafy as in an English June; for there, buds, blossoms, and fruits abound throughout the year. The groves of cedar and mahogany, of the wild cotton-tree and the fig, form an assemblage of majestic columns, roofed by a canopy of foliage which the sun never penetrates, while the winds pass through, and come and go as they list. In the richest regions of

this department of the globe, the cane-fields look flourishing at this season, and coffee-plantations clothe the sides of the hills. All inanimate things look bright; and birds of gay plumage, and animals of strange forms and habits add to the interest and beauty of the scene in the eye of a stranger.

The brightest beauty, the deepest interest, however, is not for strangers, but for those who return to a region like this after years of absence, like two travellers who were hastening, one fine January day, to reach their long-left home,—a plantation in Demerara. Alfred Bruce and his sister Mary had been sent to England for their education when they were, the one seven, the other six years of age. They had spent fourteen years without seeing their parents, except that their father paid one short visit to England about the middle of the time. Of him, they had, of course, a very vivid recollection, as they believed they had of their mother, of their nurse, of the localities of the plantation, and the general appearance of the country. They now, however, found themselves so much mistaken in the last particular, that they began to doubt the accuracy of their memories about the rest.

On landing, they had been full of delight at the contrast between an English and a Guiana winter. When they had gone onboard, in the Thames, a thick fog had hung over London, and concealed every object from them but the houses on the banks, which looked all the more dingy for the snow which lay upon their roofs. When

they landed, their native shores reposed in the serene beauty of an evening sunshine. By as bright a sunshine they were lighted on the next day; and it still shone upon them as they approached their father's estate; but it no longer seemed to gladden them, for they became more and more silent, only now and then uttering an exclamation.

"How altered every place looks!" said Mary. "The birds seem the only living things."

A servant, who had come to meet the travellers with the carriage, reminded her that it was now the time of dinner, and that in an hour or so the slaves would be seen in the fields again.

"It is not only that we see no people," said Alfred; "but the country, cultivated as it is, looks uninhabited. No villages, no farm-houses! Only a mansion here and there, seemingly going to decay, with a crowd of hovels near it. I remembered nothing of this. Did you, Mary?"

No. Mary thought the face of the country must have changed very considerably; but the old servant said it was much the same as it had always been in his time.

"Something must have befallen the cattle, surely?" observed Mary. "I never saw such wretched, starved-looking cows in England."

The servant, who had never beheld any better, smiled at his young mistress's prejudices, and only answered that these were her father's cattle, and that yonder mansion was his house.

In a few minutes more, the long-anticipated

meeting had taken place. Alfred, sitting beside his mother's couch, with his beautiful little sister Louisa on his knee; and Mary, with her father's arm about her waist, forgot all their expectations, all their confused recollections, in present happiness. Their only anxiety was for Mrs. Bruce, who looked as if recovering from an illness. They would not believe her when she declared, with a languid smile, that she was as well as usual; but her husband added his testimony that she had never been better. Mrs. Bruce would have been as much surprised at her daughter's fresh colour and robust appearance, if she had not been more in the habit of intercourse with Europeans than her daughter with West Indians.

These young people were far happier this first day—far more exempt from disappointment—than many who return to the home of their childhood after years of absence. Their father was full of joy,—their mother, of tenderness. Louisa was as spirited, and clever, and captivating a little girl as they had ever seen; and her perfect frankness and ease of manner showed them how much liberty of speech and action was allowed her by her parents, and how entirely they might therefore reckon on the freedom which is so precious to young people when they reach what appears to them the age of discretion. Alfred was as much surprised as pleased to observe this spirit of independence in other members of the family. The white servants, as well those whom he had never seen before as the compa

nions of his childhood, met him with an outstretched hand and a hearty welcome; and he observed that they addressed his father more as if they were his equals than his domestics. Alfred immediately concluded that his most sanguine hopes were justified, and that his father was indeed no tyrant, no arbitrary disposer of the fortunes of his inferiors, but a just and kind employer of their industry.

Mary, meanwhile, could not help observing the strangeness of the domestic management she witnessed. The black servants whom she met about the house were only half-clothed, and many of them without shoes and stockings; while her mother was as splendidly dressed as if she had been going to a ball. The rich sideboard of plate, and the whole arrangement of the table, answered to her dim but grand remembrances of the magnificence in which her parents lived; but the house was in as bad repair, and every apartment as unfinished, as if the mansion was going to decay before it was half completed. Having been told, however, before she left England, that she must not look for English comfort in another climate, she presently reconciled herself to whatever displeased her eye or her taste.

Before Louisa went to bed, her brother asked her if she would take a walk with him and Mary in the cool of the morning: they remembered the sound of the conch of old, and they wished to see the people go forth to their work. Louisa laughed heartily, supposing her brother to be in

jest; and Mrs. Bruce explained that nobody in the house was up for many hours after the conch sounded; but when it appeared that Alfred was serious, Louisa, liking the idea of a frolic, promised to be ready. There was no occasion, as there would have been in England, to make any proviso about the weather being fine.

It was a delicious morning, bright and balmy, when the young people went forth. The sun was just peeping above the horizon, and the families of slaves appearing from their dwellings. They came with a lagging step, as if they did not hear the impatient call of the white man who acted as superintendent, or the crack of the driver's whip. Their names were called over, and very few were missing. The driver pointed with his whip to the sun, and observed that there was no excuse for sluggards on so bright a morning.

"Do you find the weather make much difference?" inquired Alfred.

"All the difference, sir. On a chill, foggy morning, such as we sometimes have at this season, it is impossible to collect the half of them before breakfast; and those that come do little or no work. They like the whip better than a fog, for they are made to live in sunshine."

"Does my father insist on their working in raw weather?" asked Alfred. "I should not have thought it could answer to either party."

"They are so lazy," replied the overseer, "that it does not do to admit any excuse whatever, except in particular cases. If we once let

them off on such a plea, we should soon hear of more just as good."

"True enough," thought Alfred, who, earnestly as he had endeavoured to keep his mind free from prejudice respecting the institution of slavery, yet entertained a deep dislike of the system.

More than a third of the slaves assembled were men and women of the ages most fitted for hard labour, and of the greatest strength of frame that negroes attain in slavery.... These brought with them their hoes and knives, and each a portion of provision for breakfast. Having delivered their vegetables to the women who were to cook their messes, they were marched off to their labour in the coffee-walks. The second gang consisted of young boys and girls, women who were not strong enough for severe toil, and invalids who were sufficiently recovered to do light work: these were dispersed in the plantations, weeding between the rows of young plants. Little children, with an old woman near to take care of them, were set to collect greens for the pigs, or to weed the garden, or to fetch and carry what was wanted. These formed the third gang; and they showed far more alacrity, and were found to do much more in proportion to their strength, than the stoutest man of the first company. They alone showed any interest in the presence of the strangers. They looked back at Mary from time to time as the old woman sent them before her to the garden, and were seen to peep from the

gates as long as Alfred and his sisters remained in sight. The other gangs did not appear to observe that any one was by; and such of them as were spoken to scarcely looked at their young master as they made their reply.

The young people took a turn through the walks, where the slaves were setting coffee-plants. There could not be better materials to work upon, a finer climate to live in, a richer promise of a due reward for labour, than Alfred saw before him; but never had he beheld employment so listlessly pursued, and such a waste of time. When he observed how the walks were sheltered from the north winds, how thriving the young plants appeared, how fit a soil the warm gravelly mould formed for their growth, he almost longed to be a labourer himself, at least during the cool morning hours. But the people before him did not seem to share his taste. At a little distance he could scarcely perceive that any of them moved; and when they did, it was in a more slow and indolent manner than he could have conceived. He had seen labourers in an English plantation marking out the ground, and digging the holes, and spreading the roots, and covering them with so much despatch, that the business of the superintendent was to watch that they did not get over their ground too fast; while here it took eight minutes to measure eight feet from stem to stem; and as for laying the roots, one would have thought each fibre weighed a stone by the difficulty there seemed to be in the work. He reminded Mary how, at this hour of

the morning, an English ploughman leads forth his team in the chill of a February mist, and whistles, while eye and hand are busy marking out his furrows; while, in this bright and fragrant season, the black labourers before them seemed to heed neither their employment on the one hand nor the sunshine on the other. Quite out of patience, at last, at seeing a strong man throw down his hoe, when the hole he was preparing was all but cleared, Alfred snatched up the tool, finished the business, and went on to another and another, till he had done more in half an hour than any slave near him since sunrise. Louisa looked on in horror; for she had never seen a white man, much less a gentleman, at work in a plantation; but when she perceived that her sister looked more disposed to help than to find fault, she ran away laughing to tell the overseer what Alfred was doing.

"You look well pleased to have your work done for you," said Alfred to the slave; "but I hope you will now bestir yourself as briskly for your master as I have done for you."

When Alfred looked at the man for an answer, he fancied that he knew his face.

"What is your name?"

"Willy."

"What, old Mark's son, Willy?"

"Yes, old Mark is my father."

"Why, Willy, have you forgotten me as I had nearly forgotten you? Don't you remember master Alfred?"

"O yes, very well."

"Is this Willy who used to carry you on his shoulders?" asked Mary, "and who used to draw my little chaise round the garden? He was a high-spirited, merry boy, at——what age was he then?"

"Twelve when we went away. But, Willy, why did not you come and speak to me as soon as you saw me? You might have been sure that I should remember you when you told me your name."

Willy made no answer, so Alfred went on—

"I find your father is alive still, and I mean to go and see him to-day; for I hear he keeps at home now on account of his great age. Can you show me his cottage?"

Willy pointed out a cottage of rather a superior appearance to some about it, and said his father was always within or in the provision-ground beside it. His mother was dead, but his two sisters, Becky and Nell, were at hand; one was now in the field yonder, and the other was one of the cooks, whom he would see preparing breakfast under the tree.

There was time to see the slaves at breakfast before the same meal would be ready at home. They assembled in the shade at the sound of the conch, and each had his mess served out to him. The young people did not wish to interfere with this short period of rest, and therefore, after speaking kindly to two or three whom they remembered, they walked away. As they were going, they met a few of the sluggards who had not put in their appearance at the proper hour,

and who sauntered along, unwilling (as they well might be) to meet the driver.

"What will be done to them?" asked Mary.

"They will only be whipped a little," said Louisa. Her sister stared to hear her speak so lightly of being whipped.

"O, I do not mean flogged so that they cannot work; but just a stroke or two, this way."

And she switched her brother with the cane she snatched from his hand. Seeing that both looked still dissatisfied, she went on—

"What better can they do in England when people are late at their work? for I suppose people sleep too long there sometimes, as they do here."

Her brother told her, to her great surprise, that lazy people are punished in England by having their work taken from them; there being plenty of industrious labourers who are glad to get it. She said there was nothing her papa's slaves would like so much as not to have to work; but she had never heard of such a thing being allowed, except on Sundays and holidays.

In their way home they looked in on old Mark, whom they found eating his breakfast, attended upon by his daughter Becky, who had come in from the field for that purpose. Mark had been an industrious man in his day—in his own provision-ground at least; and, in consequence, he was better off than most of his neighbours. His cottage consisted of three rooms, and had a boarded floor. He had a chest for his clothes, and at holiday times he was more

gaily dressed than any of his younger neighbours. A few orange-trees and bananas shaded the cottage, and gave the outside a somewhat picturesque appearance, but the inside looked anything but agreeable, Mary thought. The walls were merely wattled and smeared with plaster; and the roof, thatched with cocoa-nut leaves, had holes in it to let out the smoke of the nightly fire, which is necessary to keep negroes warm enough to sleep. In the day-time they cook out of doors.

Mark had never been very bright in his intellects during his best days; and now the little light he had was clouded with age. He was easily made to understand, however, who his guests were. He told some anecdotes of Alfred's childhood; and when once set talking, went on as if he would never have done. He appeared excessively conceited; for the tendency of all he said was to prove his own merits. He related how he had told the truth on one occasion, and been brave on another; and how the overseer had been heard to say that he made the most of his provision-ground, and how the estimate of his value had been raised from time to time. Even when he gave instances of his master's kindness to him, it appeared that he only did so as proving his own merit. What was yet more strange, Becky had exactly the same taste in conversation. She not only listened with much deference to all her father had to say, but took up the strain when he let it fall. The young people soon grew tired of this, and cut short the

rambling narratives of the compliments which Becky had received from white people in her time. The conceit only took a new form, however; at every word of kindness which either Alfred or Mary spoke, both the slaves looked prouder and prouder.

'What odd, disagreeable people!" exclaimed Mary, as she turned away from the door; "I always thought we should find slaves too humble, servile; I hardly know how to treat them when they are proud."

"Our slaves are particularly proud, because papa has treated them kindly," observed Louisa. "Mr. Mitchelson laughs at us when we are tired of hearing them praise themselves, and says that if we used them properly they would never tease us in that way; and I have heard that Mrs. Mitchelson says to her daughter, 'My dear, do not look so conceited, or I shall think you have been talking with Mr. Bruce's slaves.'"

Louisa could not satisfy her brother as to why slaves were made disagreeable by being kindly treated. All she knew was, that slaves were either silent and obstinate, like Willy, or talkative and conceited like his father and sisters. Alfred pondered the matter as he went home. "My loves!" said their mother, in her usual feeble voice, as the young folks entered the breakfast-room, "how weary you must be with all you have done! I would have had breakfast an hour earlier than usual if you had been in; for I am sure you must all be tired to death. Louisa, love, rest yourself on my couch."

Louisa did so; and her brother and sister were not believed when they declared they were untired.

"When you know our climate a little better," said Mr. Bruce, "you will no more dream of such long walks than the English of staying at home all a fine summer's day; which I suppose they seldom do. But if you really are not tired, Alfred, we will ride over to Paradise by and by. I promised to take you to see your old friends, the Mitchelsons, as soon as you arrived; and they are in a hurry to welcome you."

Chapter II.

LAW ENDANGERS PROPERTY IN DEMERARA.

During a ride of several miles, Mr. Bruce and his son were deep in conversation on the subject of their affairs, which were in a state to cause great anxiety to both, though the anxiety of each differed much in character. Mr. Bruce had made less and less by his plantation every year for some years past; and he was now quite out of heart, and full of complaints about the hardships inflicted on himself and his brother planters, by what he called oppression at home, and the competition of other countries in their trade. He was not a very clear-headed, though a good-

hearted man; and he had passed nearly his whole life within the bounds of his own plantation; so that he, as a matter of course, adopted the views of planters in general, and joined in the cry for higher bounties on West India produce, and thought that the obvious way to relieve West India distress was to obtain more exclusive monopolies. He took credit to himself for being even better entitled than most of his brethren to complain of neglect and want of protection, as he could not oppress his slaves in his turn, nor endeavour to wrest out of them a compensation for his losses in trade. He was too humane a man for this. Thus believing that through the cruelty of the government and nation at home, and his own tender-heartedness, he was going to ruin at a great rate, he was heartily tired of his occupations, and ready to open his mind to his son, and consult with him as to what should be done.

Young as Alfred was, he was deserving of his father's confidence, and far more likely to offer him good counsel, when he should have had a little experience, than any of the neighbouring gentlemen who met from time to time to condole with each other, and draw up memorials to Government. Alfred had been in good hands in England. He had been educated for the station he was to hold, and so carefully instructed in both sides of the great questions which were to be before him through life, that there was no danger of his being blind to all but what he chose

to see, or deaf to all but that which a certain class chose to say. A fine estate in Barbadoes was likely soon to lapse to him; and the knowledge that he might at any hour be called upon to act in the responsible situation for which he had been educated, stimulated his study of his duties and his insight into his prospects. He did not, of course, make up his mind respecting the details of the management of a plantation before he had had the opportunity of observing how the actual system worked; but certain broad principles were fixed in his mind,—principles which may be attested in any part of the world, and which could not, he thought, be made void by any connexion, or obscured by any aspect of circumstances whatever. With these principles full in his mind, he began, from the moment he set foot on shore, to observe all that surrounded him wherever he went, and to obtain information from every class of persons to whom he could gain access.

On the present occasion, his father enforced his complaints of West India adversity, by pointing to the estates on either hand as they rode along, and relating how they had changed owners, and what disasters had befallen their various proprietors.

"In England," said he, "estates go down from generation to generation, and a man may have some pleasure in improving and cultivating, in the hope that his children's great-grandchildren may profit by and carry on his labours.

But here, no man knows whether his son will be the better for all he does."

"We shall never prosper," replied Alfred, "till the system is wholly changed. Security of property is one of the prime elements of prosperity."

"And that security can never be reached here, son. As soon as a man thinks he is likely to do well, there comes a hurricane, or a mortality among his slaves, or, worst of all, an insurrection; and perpetually, some thwarting measure of our enemies at home. They need not envy us our possessions here; for I am sure it requires the patience of Job to be an India planter."

"It must require more patience, father, than I shall ever have, to hold property which is needlessly insecure."

"How do you mean *needlessly* insecure?"

"I mean insecure through bad institutions. I do not see at present how we are to guard against hurricanes; but if I were convinced that the other evils you mention could not be removed, I would as soon go into Turkey and hold my chattels at the pleasure of the sultan, as be your heir. There is little to choose between any two countries where there is not security of property."

"But what I complain of, Alfred, is, that the law does not secure us our property. If the same law secures property in England, why does it not here?"

"Aye, there is the question, father. Is it not clear that there is some flaw in our institutions here which keeps them out of the pale of the protection of law? Hurricanes and bad seasons are answerable for a very small portion of our distress; and to set against them, we have, as with all our complaints we cannot deny, a very extraordinary degree of protection from government; though we cannot manage to benefit much by it. By far the larger share of our evils are such as law cannot remedy; and since that law works far better in England than here, it is plain that the fault does not rest with the law."

"I am sure it is time we were looking into it, son."

"High time, indeed: but people are unwilling to look deep enough. If some of the pains that are spent in providing expedients for the management of property, were employed in examining into its nature and tenure, we should be more in the way of finding out what part of our system is wrong."

"My dear son, you really are too hard upon us. Do you think we do not know what property is?"

"I do; because I think we hold a great deal that does not belong to us. We can find that out presently by going back to the beginning. Taking the old pagan fable of the first pair of human beings coming out of a cave, and supposing that cave to be in yonder hill,—what

property,—what of *their own* would that man and woman have on first coming into the daylight?"

"As soon as they chose to take possession, they might have a whole continent."

"Aye; but before they took possession: as they stood, hand in hand, at the mouth of the cave."

"Why nothing: for if the man said, 'That tree, bending with fruit, is mine,' the woman might say, 'No, I want it;' and neither could give a reason for keeping it that the other might not offer as well."

"True,—as to the fruit tree; but there is a possession for each which each has a sound reason for claiming. Suppose the man to say to the woman, 'The hair of my head is too short, and I will have some of yours;' or the woman to say, 'I have not strength enough in my limbs, and you must work for me,' has either any property in the person of the other?"

"Certainly not. If the woman wants the whole of her hair to shade her face at noonday, and the man the whole strength of his limbs for toil or sport, there is no reason why each should not keep his own if he can. But most likely one would be stronger than the other, and then possession would be taken."

"But not property established. If the man cut off the woman's tresses while she slept, the hair would be no longer a part of the woman, as strength of limb or faculties of sense: yet the woman would still have the best title to it as

having been hers by original endowment. If the woman, in her turn, bound the man's feet as he lay sick on the ground, and would not release him till he had dug up as many roots for her as she chose, would the man, therefore, or his strength of limb, become her property?"

"Certainly not; for if he chooses to dig up no more roots than he eats himself, she can do nothing with him for her own advantage; and the moment he can free himself he will. This is merely force acting against force, and there is no right in the case."

"But the woman has a right to cut off her own hair, and the man to employ his own strength, as long as he does not trespass on his companion's personal rights. Now, we see that man has no natural property in man."

"Nor in anything else but himself," interrupted Mr. Bruce, "as you began by showing. If you can prove that man has now any right to property in the fruits of the earth, it follows that he may in man."

"I think not," said Alfred. "The question depends on what constitutes *right*. I think that man has a conventional, though not a natural right, to the productions of the earth; but neither the one nor the other can sanction his holding man in property. There may be a general agreement that men shall take and keep possession of portions of land; but there can never be a general agreement that man shall be lord of man. If the man and woman agree to take each a portion of land, and not to interfere with one another,

that agreement is a kind of law; and, in proportion as it is observed, the property of each will be secure. The same plan is pursued by their descendants till they become too numerous to make a mere agreement a sufficient security. They then agree upon an express law, sanctioned by certain punishments, which once more secure to each the possession of what has now become his property by common consent."

"Such agreement and such law," said Mr. Bruce, "are essential to the general good; for there would be no end to violence and fraud, no inducement to improvement, no mutual confidence and enjoyment, if the law of brute force were to exclude all other law."

"True," said Alfred. "The general good is not only the origin, but ought to be the end and aim of the institution of property. With the property in man which has been assumed from age to age, the case is very different; and there never was a time when that sort of property could be secure, or established by general agreement, or conducive to the general good. One needs but to draw a parallel between the histories of the two kinds of property to see this."

"Histories too long for me and my neighbours to study, I am afraid, Alfred."

"They may be very briefly sketched, father. Capital held by the tenure of mutual agreement, —that is, property in all things created subordinate to man, has a perpetual tendency to increase and improvement; and every such increase is an addition to the good of society.

Cultivators of the land have made their portions more and more productive, so as to maintain a greater number of people perpetually. Inventions have arisen, arts have improved, manufactures have extended, till a far larger multitude of people spend their lives in ease and enjoyment, than would ever have been born if security of property had been unknown. There is this conspicuous mark of blessing on capital rightly applied, that the more it increases the more it will increase; while precisely the reverse is the fact with that which is unrighteously made capital. The more eagerly it is applied, the faster it dwindles away; the more it is husbanded, the more want it causes. Its increase adds to the sum of human misery; its diminution brings a proportionate relief."

"Why, then, has there been slavery in all ages of the world?"

"Because the race, like the individual, is slow in learning by experience: but the race has learned, and goes on to learn notwithstanding; and slavery becomes less extensive with the lapse of centuries. In ancient times, a great part of the population of the most polished states was the property of the rest. Those were the days when the lords of the race lived in barbarous, comfortless splendour, and the bulk of the people in extreme hardship;—the days of Greek and Roman slavery. Then came the bondage and villeinage of the Gothic nations,—far more tolerable than the ancient slavery, because the bondmen lived on their native soil, and had some

sort of mutual interest with their owners; but it was not till they were allowed property that their population increased, and the condition of themselves and their masters improved. The experience of this improvement led to further emancipation; and that comparative freedom again to further improvement, till the state of a boor as to health, comfort, and security of property, is now superior to that of the lord of his forefathers. In the same manner, my dear sir, it might be hoped that the condition of the descendants of your slaves, a thousand years hence, would be happier than yours to-day, if our slaves were the original inhabitants of the soil they till. As it is, I fear that our bad institutions will die out only in the persons of those most injured by them. But that they will die out, the slave-history of Europe is our warrant; and then, and then only, will the laws of England secure the property of Englishmen as fully abroad as at home. It is no reproach upon laws framed to secure righteous property, that they do not guard that which is unrighteous. Consider once more who are the parties to the law, and the case will be clear.

"The government and the holders of the property are the parties to the maintenance of the law. The infringers of the law are the third party, whom it is the mutual interest of the other two to punish. So the matter stands in England, where the law works comparatively well. Here the case is wholly changed by the second and third parties being identical, while the first

treats them as being opposed to each other. The infringer of the law,—that is, the rebellious slave, being the property of—that is, the same party with, his owner, the benefits of the compact are destroyed to all. If the slave is not to be punished, the owner's property (his plantation) is not safe. If he is punished, the owner's property (the slave) is injured. No wonder the master complains of the double risk to his property; but such risk is the necessary consequence of holding a subject of the law in property."

"You put me in mind, son, of old Hodge's complaint,—you remember Hodge,—about his vicious bull. He thought it very hard that, after all the mischief done to his own stock, he should be compelled by the overseer to kill the bull. Hodge owned a rebellious subject of the law."

"True; and Hodge was to be pitied, because there was no making a free labourer of his bull. But if he had had the choice whether to hold the animal itself as capital, or only its labour, we should have laid the blame of his double loss upon himself."

"You must hear what Mitchelson has to say on that subject, son. He has suffered as much in his time as any man from troublesome slaves. More than one was executed, and several ran away while his last lease was current. His management has changed, however, with the change of times."

"Is he suffering, like every body else?"

"Yes; and I do not think he would have renewed his lease if he had anticipated how prices

would fall. But he is a prudent man, and knows how to mould his plan to differences of circumstance."

"Who is his landlord?"

"Stanley, who has lived in England these fifteen years, you know. When he left this neighbourhood, he let Paradise to Mitchelson for ten years, at a thousand a year. There was a permanent population of 300 slaves on the estate at that time."

"If there were no more than 300 slaves, sugars must have borne a better price than they do now, to make it a good bargain to Mitchelson."

"They averaged a gross price of 30*l.* a ton. In addition to the rent, the other charges amounted to about 20*l.* a ton; so that Mitchelson's net income was 1000*l.*"

"And prices being higher than at present, he was tempted to work his slaves to the utmost?"

"Yes; but another part of the agreement was, that the plantation, with all belonging to it, should be appraised when the lease expired, and that Mitchelson should pay up for any damage it might have sustained, or pocket the value of any improvement. He made his calculations carefully, and found that it would hardly answer to overwork his slaves considerably, as what he would have to pay up for the sacrifice of life at the end of ten years, would balance the present increase of profits from making more sugar; so he began moderately: but when prices rose to 40*l.* a ton, adding 2000*l.* to his income, it be-

came clearly his interest to increase his crop. He determined therefore to add 100 tons to it, even at an expense of life of 1000*l*. But it is inconceivable what trouble he had after a time. He can tell you as much as any man I know about the inefficiency of the law for the protection of property."

Alfred made no reply; and there was a long silence.

"Well!" continued his father, "do not you wish to know the end of Mitchelson's speculation?"

"O! by all means. I was thinking what would be the issue of it——at the end of time."

"At the close of the lease,—that is, five years ago,—he willingly paid up for the slaves that were under-ground, and got a renewal——"

"Pray, did Stanley understand his system?"

"Why, I should suppose he did, having lived here some years himself; but whether he did or not, he found Mitchelson a good tenant, and that was all that concerned him. No sooner was Mitchelson set going again, than prices fell, and fell, till they were only 25*l*. a ton."

"Thank God!" cried Alfred.

"Nay; I was really very sorry, independently of my own stake in the market. It was truly mortifying that it should happen at the beginning of a lease. He made the best of it, however, and saw that if he could not bring his crops just to answer the rent and expenses, he might make his profit at the end of the lease by a large claim on the score of improvements. So he changed

his system entirely, as you will see presently. He raises food for slaves and cattle on ground which he cropped before, feeds them well and works them lightly, so that their numbers may increase, and has even had his slaves taught mechanical arts. He will have a pretty heavy lump of profits, at the end of another five years, if this state of things continues."

"We are told in England, father, that it is the interest of planters to be humane to their slaves, and the English are too apt to believe it. I trust that you have never put your hand to such a declaration since Mitchelson opened his affairs to you; or that you explain it away like an innkeeper I knew in England."

"What did he declare?"

"A gentleman was giving him a lecture about over-working his post-horses. 'Bless me, sir!' said the man, 'do you think I know my own interest in the poor beasts no better than that? It is my interest, you see, to keep them in good condition till the election, our great county election, which comes on in three weeks.' 'And what becomes of your horses then?' 'There must be wear and tear at those times, you know; but when that fortnight is over, there will be rest for man and beast: for it is always a dead time for posting just after an election.' 'Much good may your tender mercies do your carrion!' said the gentleman, as I shall be tempted to say to Mitchelson, if he tells me the story of his two leases."

"Let me just observe, Alfred, that I hope

you will not admit any prejudice against Mitchelson on account of your peculiar opinions about property. He is the most humane man to his white servants, the most indulgent parent, the best——"

"Father," interrupted Alfred, "I assure you, once for all, that when I hear of cruelties in the gross, I execrate systems, not men. If I had thought of individuals as I do of institutions here, you would have already had my farewell, and I should have been on board ship again for England by this time."

"Patience! my dear boy, patience!"

"Not with abuses, father; not with social crimes. As much as you please in enlightening those who are unaware of them: but with the abuses themselves, no patience!"

Chapter III.

PROSPERITY IMPOVERISHES IN DEMERARA.

Alfred was not at all disposed to gainsay what his father protested about Mr. Mitchelson's native kindliness of disposition. He remembered the days when it was a common indulgence to be carried about the grounds in Mr. Mitchelson's arms, or to sit on his knee, and listen to stories of that England to which he was to go, some

time or other. He ascribed this gentleman's treatment of his slaves, not to any love of tyranny for its own sake, but to the grand error of regarding human beings as property, operating upon pecuniary interest. Though, therefore, it was impossible to regard him with the same esteem as if he had known how to respect the rights of his fellow-men, Alfred was not disposed to visit the sins of a system upon an individual who had always treated him with kindness; and he therefore met his old friend's cordial greeting with frank good-humour.

The ladies were not at home; but they would be in long before it would be necessary for the Bruces to be turning homewards. Would they step indoors and rest, or prolong their ride to a once favourite seat of Alfred's, where the pavilion peeped out from among the trees? The gentlemen were for proceeding, Alfred with the hope of making some observations by the way, and obtaining a distant view of the sea from the verandah of the pavilion.

The gangs of slaves were at work in the cane-fields through which they passed; but the apathy with which they pursued their employment was even more striking than on Mr. Bruce's estate. Alfred thought within himself how poor is the purchase of a man. It is the mind that makes the value of the man. It is the mind which gives sight to the eye, and hearing to the ear, and strength to the limbs; and the mind cannot be purchased,—only that small portion of it which can be brought under the dread of the whip and

the stocks. Where the man is allowed the possession of himself, the purchaser of his labour is benefited by the vigour of his mind through the service of his limbs: where man is made the possession of another, the possessor loses at once and for ever, all that is most valuable in that for which he has paid the price of crime. He becomes the owner of that which only differs from an idiot in being less easily drilled into habits, and more capable of effectual revenge.

Alfred lingered to watch the scene before him, though the sun shed down a flood of rays that would have been thought intolerable in England, and though the doves were cooing in the shade which his companions had already reached, and humming-birds were flitting among the stems like flying blossoms from some paradise that better deserved the name than this. The overseer was finding fault with one of the slaves, a middle-aged man, of robust make and a more intelligent countenance than most of his companions. Alfred asked what was the matter.

"He is lazy, sir, as usual: and as usual, he says that he is a very bad labourer and never was worth much to his master; but he can work hard enough in his provision-ground. Nobody brings so many vegetables and pigs to market as Cassius."

"How is this, Cassius?" said Alfred.

Cassius only repeated what he had said about the impossibility that he should do much work, as he had always been a bad slave for labour.

At this moment the gong sounded the hour

of dinner. The overseer went away. Cassius slowly walked off, as it happened, in the same direction that Alfred was going. When he had reached the shade, the slave looked behind him to see that the overseer was not observing him, and then quickened his pace almost to a run. Alfred tied his horse to a tree, followed him, and reached his provision-ground a very few minutes after him. Cassius was already at work, digging as if he were toiling for wages.

Alfred laughed good-humouredly as he asked Cassius what he said now about the impossibility of his working like other people.

Cassius put on a sullen look while he answered,

"You may ask my master, and he will tell you that he has always had trouble with me. When I was a youth, I never liked work, and I have done less and less ever since. I am worth very little to him. I have been whipped five times since last crop, and I got into the stocks many times last year. I eat more than my work pays for."

"Then I wonder your master keeps you. Don't you?"

"I wonder he puts such a high ransom upon me. It is too high for such an one as I."

"And are you working out your ransom, Cassius?"

"I am trying, sir. But I shall have eaten more than it is worth before I get money to pay it."

"Now," thought Alfred, "I understand the meaning of this extraordinary humility, and of

old Mark's and Becky's conceit, too," he added, as he remembered what had passed in the morning; "they wish to enhance their own value, from a suspicion that they will change masters one of these days; and Cassius depreciates his, because he hopes to get off with a lower ransom. Dreadful! that human beings should rate their own value according to the depth of another man's purse! They seem, too, to have no idea of natural disinterested kindness; for Mark and Becky took all the merit of my father's little indulgences to themselves. They seemed to think they must be much better than their neighbour Harry, because my father roofed their cottage after the storm, while Harry was obliged to wait till he could repair his himself. How this world is turned upside down when slaves are in it!"

"Come, Cassius," he said aloud, "I am not your master, and I am not going to speak to your master about you."

"You do not want to buy me?" inquired Cassius, looking inquisitively.

"Not I. I have no estate, and am not likely ever to want any slaves."

"What did you follow me for then?"

"Because I was curious to see how you manage your provision-ground, if you really cannot work. But do not attempt to deceive me any more. I see you are afraid of having your ransom raised. But you need not fear. I should be too much pleased to see you obtain your freedom to put any hinderance in your way. Make me your friend, Cassius; and tell me how much

money you have earned, and how much more you want; and where you mean to go if you ge your liberty."

This was going too straight to the poin Cassius had never had a friend since he was parted from his father in his youth; and not remembering much of the comfort of having one, he was not ready with his confidence. He looked suspiciously at Alfred, put on a lazy, stupid look, and said nothing but a few words without meaning.

Alfred's next question, as it showed ignorance of what everybody in the West Indies knows, did more towards establishing a right understanding than anything else he could have said. It proved to the slave that the gentleman was not practising upon him.

"This is very fine soil," was Alfred's remark, as he turned up a spade-full of earth; "and yet I see nothing but plantains, and yams, and potatoes, unless that patch of corn-ground is yours too. Why do not you grow a few canes or coffee-plants? or cotton, at least, would answer your purpose better, I should think."

Cassius grinned with some feeling deeper than mirth, while he told the young ignoramus that no slaves were allowed to grow any of the articles their masters sell. This was clearly to guard against theft; but it seemed hard that the labour by which a ransom could alone be raised, must be employed on productions which can never become very valuable. Cassius laughed so long at the idea of a slave growing canes or coffee,

that Alfred began to regret the joke, for it did not seem a very merry one to him. He could and would have laughed in England to see a cottager growing pine-apples on a quarter of a rood of ground, because it would have been ridiculous, and it would not be against any law. Here the case was reversed; it was not ridiculous, and it was against the law; and Alfred was not disposed to laugh.

"How much time do you spend at work here, Cassius? Two hours a-day?"

Cassius laughed again, and said—

"I have not more than two hours for eating, and day-sleep, and my ground, altogether."

"Indeed! you go to work at six and leave off at eight for half an hour. You come home again to dinner, and you have two hours then, have not you?"

"No; one and a half: and sometimes I must sleep, when I have worked at night, and when it is very hot. We blacks grow cross if we do not sleep in the day."

"Well, then, there is the evening. You leave work at six, and there is time for much digging before dark."

"Not when we have the cattle-feed to gather. Sometimes we are at that till the night comes on. It is so cold," he continued, shivering at the thought of it. "When our bundles of grass are made up, we have to carry them far, and they gather the dew, and it trickles down our backs, while we wait to give them in. I had rather work two hours more in the field by star-light

than gather grass when the ground is damp, and be always scolded because the bundle is not bigger."

"Why," thought Alfred, "should cattle be fed by human labour? Or, if grass must be gathered, why not by people whose regular business it shall be to do it by day-light, instead of exposing those to the damp who are relaxed by the heat of the day? I will see how my father manages this."

During the whole time of conversation, as well as in each pause, Cassius went on with his work as if he had not a moment to lose. The hope of ransom was the spring that animated him. Everything about him testified to his eagerness for saving. His bed of planks, with its single mat and blanket, was his only furniture, except a few eating utensils; he had but one wooden trencher and two calabashes. Handsome as he was, Cassius did not seem to have the personal vanity of a negro, and on festival days was the least gaily dressed of the group. He never took a farthing from his hoard, and added to it on every possible occasion.

"Where do you mean to go when you have paid your ransom?" asked Alfred, "or will you buy land and remain? or be a free labourer for your master?"

"I go, sir, but my mind is not settled where. I hear there is a place over the sea, in my own country, where we may live in the same way that the whites live here; where we may grow sugar and coffee, and trade as we like, and be rich, and

even be governors—such as are most fit to be so. One of our people got ransomed and went, but we have never heard if he found such a place."

"You mean Liberia?"

"Yes, sir. Have you been there?"

"No; but I have been where I heard a great deal about the place. If I were you, I would go to Liberia as soon as I could—that is, if you can labour. No man can prosper at Liberia, or anywhere else, unless he exerts himself."

Cassius stood erect, and pointed with a smile to his grove of plantains, to his patch of maize, to his plots of vegetables, flourishing in a clean soil.

"I see, Cassius," said Alfred, "what you mean. I see that there was deceit in your way of speaking of yourself before the overseer. Cease to be a slave as soon as you can; but while you are here, be faithful to your master."

"Faithful!" exclaimed Cassius, looking full at him. "I have never stolen his sugar—I have never murdered his children—I have never even listened to those who talked of burning his canes or poisoning his cattle."

"God forbid! but if you are not industrious—if you do not speak the truth—you are not faithful."

"I should be unfaithful if I had ever promised either; but I never did. Why should I be industrious for him? And as for telling the truth, I will do it when it helps me to get my ransom; but if telling the truth hinders my being

free, I lie to myself when I tell the truth to my master, for I have said to myself that I will be free."

Alfred had nothing to reply, for his principles of morality had all a reference to a state of freedom, and he had not learned yet to apply them in circumstances which they did not suit. He would have said beforehand, that there could be no lack of arguments and sanctions for truth and fidelity, the two most clearly necessary bonds of society; but, at the moment, it appeared to him that not one would apply. He inquired whether there was no religious teacher on the estate, and whether he did not bid them be faithful and truthful?

"There was one some time ago, and he taught us a great deal. He told us what it was to be Christians, and he made us Christians, and said that our master and all his family were Christians too. But he could not teach us long, and he went away in a little while."

"What prevented his teaching you?"

"He could not make his stories seem true, and whenever he read the Gospel, there was something either to make us laugh, or to make the overseer or our master angry. At last, he preached one day about all men being brothers, and about all being equal when they were born, and that they should be equal again when they were dead. He was disgraced and sent away after that; and so he ought to be for preaching what was false; for our master says, the blacks never were and never will be equal with the

whites; and we know that our master and the overseer are not at all like our brothers."

"And yet," said Alfred, speaking his own thoughts, rather than thinking of the prudence of what he was saying, "there were men once who sold a brother as a slave into Egypt."

"But he was not like us," said Cassius; "for God made him a great lord over his brothers that sold him, and he let them go home again. I am sure," he continued, grinning as he spoke, "if God made us lords over the white men, we should not let them go."

"I am sorry," said Alfred, "that your teacher is gone, for it seems as if teaching like his was very much wanted. When you get to Liberia, however, you will learn these things faster and better."

He then asked for water; and while Cassius took down a calabash and disappeared to fetch some, Alfred went on digging.

"Ah! ha!" said the slave when he returned, "if I had a white gentleman to dig for me whenever I am away, I should soon go to Liberia: but I did not know that white gentlemen could dig."

"I cannot help you much in that way, Cassius; but here is what will do as well;" and he put some money into his hand. Cassius leaped high into the air, and was apparently going to sing; but checked himself in a moment when he saw the face of an old negro, a neighbour of his, peeping through the fence.

"I must be going," said Alfred; "but I

shall never find my way to the pavilion. Will this old man go with me?"

"Yes, sir; and Robert is merry and will talk all the way." So a ludicrous introduction took place between the gentleman and the roguish-looking old slave.

They had not far to go; but Robert found time to tell all his affairs to Alfred by the way. He told him that he had a cottage and provision-ground close by Cassius's, and that he had a wife as old as himself, and that they were too tired to dig and plant when they had done work, so that their ground produced but little; but that their neighbour took care that they had enough, and either gave them food or worked in their ground on a Sunday, and that he piled their fire for them every night. In answer to Alfred's remark, that Cassius was generous and kind in doing all this, old Robert said in a careless way, that Cassius was young and he and his wife old. This reminded Alfred of the fact, that respect for the aged is one of the characteristics of negroes.

He was far from feeling any of this respect in the present instance. Old Robert could not be got to answer a question straightforward, or to tell anything without contradicting himself twenty times. He told fibs about his master and Cassius and himself; had a story for every question that was asked, the object of the story being to find out how the gentleman would like to have the question answered; and praised everything and everybody that he supposed would be acceptable to a white. Alfred soon grew tired of this,

and bade him mind where he was going and leave off talking: whereupon the old man began to sing, —not, as Alfred would have liked, one of the songs of his own land, in consideration of which the cracked voice and antic action would have been forgiven,—but an English hymn, which he shouted through the wood, shaking his head, clasping his hands and turning up his eyes, which, however, never failed to warn him of the boughs which straggled across the path, and which he held aside that they might not incommode his companion. When they came within hearing of the pavilion, the chaunt became doubly devout. Mitchelson shouted to him, with an oath, to hold his tongue, to which he answered with a flippant "Very well, sir," and took his way back again, muttering to himself as he hobbled along.

'Alfred was surprised to find that Mrs. Mitchelson and her two daughters had joined the party in the pavilion. Fruit and wine were on the table; the ladies reposed on couches and the gentlemen lolled in their chairs, as English people are wont to do in a hot climate. Alfred took his seat by a window, where the spicy winds breathed softly in, and whence he could look over cane-fields glaring in the sun with coffee-walks interspersed, over groves of the cotton-tree, of the fig, the plantain and the orange, to where the sea sparkled on the horizon, with here and there a white sail gliding before the breeze.

'What luxury!" he exclaimed, "to sit in this very seat once more, to look again on this

landscape; to be regaled with such fragrance as I have only dreamed of since my childhood, and to feast on such fruit," helping himself to an orange, "as the English at home have little more idea of than the Laplanders."

"Dear me!" said Miss Grace Mitchelson, "I thought the English ate oranges. I am sure there was something about oranges in what papa read out of the newspaper about the theatre."

"Yes," said her sister Rosa, "did not they throw orange-peel on the stage, papa?"

Alfred explained that the oranges which are thought a great treat in England, are such as would be thrown away as only half-ripe at Demerara. His father looked pleased as he praised one after another of the things in which a tropical climate excels a temperate one. Mr. Mitchelson stopped him, however, in the midst of his observations on the fertility of the soils which stretched from the height on which they sat to the distant ocean.

"Fertile indeed they have been," said he, "and fertile many of them still are; but richness of soil is not a lasting advantage like a fine climate. It wears out fast, very fast, as I can tell to my cost. If you had seen what yonder cane-field produced when it first came into my hands, and could compare it with last year's crop, you would be surprised at the change."

"Do soils become exhausted faster at Demerara than elsewhere?" asked Mr. Bruce. "If not, there is a poor prospect before our whole

race. One would fear they must starve in time. What do they say in England, son?"

"They say, sir, that soils used to be exhausted there, and that, as a matter of course, they were suffered to lie fallow from time to time; but I believe sugar-planters do not like fallows."

"We cannot afford them," said Mitchelson. "We must have crops year by year to answer our expenses; and when we have short leases, we must make the most of them, whatever becomes of the land when we have done with it."

"English farmers are so far of your opinion, that the best of them say they cannot afford fallows; but neither do they exhaust their soils."

"How in the name of wonder do they manage then?"

"They practise convertible husbandry to a greater extent than we planters ever dream of. Wheat and barley exhaust the land like canes; but by growing green crops in turn with grain, and changing corn land into pasture, they renew the powers of the soil, and may go on for ever, for aught I see, till fallows are banished from the land, and every rood is fertile in its due proportion."

"That is all very well," said Mitchelson; "but it is no example for us. Sugar is our staple, and sugar we must grow. We have little use for green crops, and less for pasture."

"In the present state of things, certainly," replied Alfred. "The question is, whether it might not answer to find a use for both? I have

seen a calculation, and I mean to verify it as I have opportunity, of the expenses and profits of the management of such an estate as this by methods of convertible husbandry. Such a system involves many changes; but they seem to me likely to be all advantageous; and I long to see them tried."

"He who made the calculation had better try, son."

"He means to do so, and I shall go over to Barbadoes, some day, and see the result. He will begin by making his slaves more like English labourers——"

"There is a foolish English fancy to begin with," observed Mitchelson.

"Employing them," continued Alfred, "in a greater variety of ways than is common here, and doing much of their work with cattle. Instead of buying provisions, importing bricks, and a hundred other things that might be procured at hand, while the soil is all the time growing barren as fast as it can, he will vary his crops, thus raising food for man and beast; he will enlarge his stock of cattle, thus providing manure for his land, and butcher's meat for his people; his horses will graze for themselves instead of the slaves doing it for them, and they, meanwhile, will be making bricks and doing other things worthy of men, while the work of cattle will be done by cattle."

"Very fine, indeed! and what becomes of his sugar all this time?"

"A certain proportion of this estate will thus,

he expects, be always kept in good heart for the production of the staple on which his profits depend. The profits of this portion and the savings consequent on his management, will amount to at least as much, at the end of ten years, as the profits of growing sugar only; while his land will be in as good condition as ever, the number of his slaves increased, the quality of his stock improved, and all in good train for going on to a state of further prosperity."

"Your friend is a proprietor, I suppose, Mr. Alfred?"

"He is; but he would follow the same plan if he held a lease."

"Not he; at least if he once knew what slaves are."

"He sees, sir, that whatever slaves may be, they can do many things that cattle cannot do, while cattle do the hardest part of slaves' work better than slaves."

"To say the truth," said Mr. Bruce, "I have often wished for ploughs and oxen, if I could but have fed the cattle and employed my lazy slaves. It did seem strange, when I came back from England, to contrast the fine farm-yards and dairies I saw there, with our paddocks, where our half-starved beasts are fed with grass ready cut."

"It reminds me," observed Alfred, "of a child's story-book I saw in England, with pictures of the world turned topsy-turvy. There was one of a mare perched in a gig, with her master in harness. We might make a fellow to

it of a man cutting grass for the ox, after having done the work of the plough."

Alfred had not forgotten that ladies were present all this time, and was still further from supposing that the conversation could be interesting to them; but he was relieved from all consideration for them, by having seen them long before drop asleep, or shut their eyes so as to prohibit conversation as much as if they were. When the gentleman rose, however, to return to the mansion, the fair ones roused themselves and took each an arm to be conducted through the wood. What was the subject of their conversation is not recorded; but it was probably not convertible husbandry, as the ladies of Demerara hear quite enough in the gross of the troubles of a plantation, to be excusable for wishing to avoid the details of grievances which they are told can be remedied by no other power than the English government.

Chapter IV.

CHILDHOOD IS WINTRY IN DEMERARA.

Old Robert seemed to care so little for slavery himself, that perhaps it was natural that he should expect others to care as little; and that he should laugh at his neighbour Cassius for working so hard as he did in his provision-ground, and for

his general gravity of manner. Yet Robert knew something of the worst treatment of slaves. He was one who had survived the system of over-working which high prices had occasioned; and he showed that he remembered its hardships by his present dislike of work and contrivances to avoid it. Not a slave on the plantation was so inventive of excuses, so rich in pretences, so ready with long stories and jokes, all designed to stave off work, as Robert, unless it were his wife. None were at the same time so impatient of idleness in others as they; and there was not a hardship which they had suffered, not a threat which had terrified them in former days, not a punishment that it came within their power to inflict, that they did not practise whenever opportunity threw an inferior in their way. If Robert had to lead a horse or drive an ox anywhere, he was sure to beat and torment the animal to the utmost by the way. If his wife found a reptile in her dwelling, she killed it as slowly as she dared, and as cruelly as she could. It would have been well if their power had not been extended beyond beasts, birds, and reptiles; but it was not only shown, by their example, that slavery is the school of tyranny, but, in the instance of a poor little sufferer who lived with them, that the most dreadful lot on earth is to be the slave of slaves.

Little Hester was only ten years old when she was first put under old Sukey, according to the custom by which novices in bondage are made to serve a sort of apprenticeship to those who

have been long under the yoke. Some humane masters observing the facilities thus afforded to slave-tyranny, have attempted to break through the custom, but have found that, with all its abuses, it is too much liked by the slaves to be given up. The children prefer, at the outset, being instructed by their own people; and the elderly folks find pleasure, some in the exercise of authority, and others in reviving their impressions of their own young days of friendless slavery. No one who knows how fond negroes are of excitements of feeling, will wonder at their seeking this melancholy enjoyment. There are many instances where the pupil has been cherished by a mother whose babe had been early taken from her by death or violence; or by a father who had seen his sons carried off to a distance, one by one, as they became valuable for their strength or skill. There are many more instances, however, where the young slave's lot is more chequered than that of childhood in any other part of the world; where kindness is as capricious or rare as sunshine and warmth to the blossoms of a Greenland meadow. Little Hester seemed to wither fast under the treatment of her master and mistress, as they called themselves; but a tone of voice gentler than usual, a mild word, a look of encouragement, would revive her and strengthen her till the next gleam came. There was no end to her troubles but in sleep; and she never slept without dreading the waking. Wearied as she was when she laid herself down on her mat, she was apt to sleep as

long as the old people; and if she ever failed to jump up when the gong sounded, Robert was sure either to throw cold water over her, or to touch her feet with a blazing piece of wood from the fire, and to laugh at her start and cry. However foggy the morning, out she must go to the field; and do as much of other people's work as was put upon her by her master's order. However tired at noon, she must cook the mess of vegetables, and feed the pigs, and run hither and thither in the broiling sun. However dewy the evening, she must stand in the grass and pluck as much as she could carry; and, having carried it, must be kept the last, as she was the youngest, before she was relieved of her burden. She dared not put it down and leave it; for, when she once did so, she was flogged for not having gathered her portion. When she came home damp and shivering, she was thrust from the fire; and creeping under her mat, lay awake till the smoke hung thick enough round her to warm her, and make her forget her bodily hunger and her cravings of the heart in sleep. These cravings of the heart were her worst misery; for she had known what it was to be cherished, and to love in return. Of her father she remembered little. He had been executed for taking part in an insurrection when she was very young; but her mother and she had lived together till lately. She had seen her mother die, and had stood by the grave where she was buried; yet she awoke every morning expecting to see her leaning over her mat. She dreamed almost every night that

her arm was round her mother's neck, and that her mother sang to her, or that they were going together to find out the country where her father was waiting for them; but as often as she awoke, she saw old Robert's ugly face instead, as he stood with his red and blue cap on, mocking her; or heard both shouting the hymns which she hated, because they were most sung on Sundays when she was more unhappy than on other days, being tormented at home, and just as much overworked as in the field, without any one to pity her or speak for her. Cassius now and then took her into his ground and gave her some fruit; and he had once stopped Sukey when he thought she had beat the girl enough; but his respect for the aged prevented his seeing how cruel these people were; and, supposing that the poor child would be a slave all her days, he did not "make her discontented with her condition," as the overseer's phrase was on all occasions of interference.

One day, when Hester returned from her morning's work, she found the cottage empty, and her dinner left on the table as if her master and mistress had taken their's, or did not mean to return for it. The little girl danced to the door to shut it, and then sat down on her mat to eat her mess of vegetables and herrings. Almost before she had done, she sank down asleep, for, besides being overwearied as usual, the absence of scolding tongues made such an unwonted quiet in the dwelling, that she felt as if it was night. She slept this time without fear of being

roused by fire or water; for Robert was taking his turn that day as watchman of the provision-grounds in the neighbourhood; and on these occasions the old man frequently took his dinner in a neighbour's dwelling, and his wife made holiday also during the hour and a half she could call her own. Hester therefore thought herself secure till the gong should sound. She was mistaken, however; for after dreaming that she heard the dreaded voice calling her, and that she knew it was only a dream, she felt her hair twitched smartly, and started at Sukey's shout of—

"Don't you hear your master calling you?"

"Sleep has no master," said the poor little girl, trying to rouse herself, and to remember what time of day it was. "Is the sun up? Shall I be flogged?"

"Yes; you shall be flogged if you don't run this moment to the sick house and say that your mistress is ill, and can't work any more to-day. Make haste, or you won't be there before the gong sounds."

"But," said the child, looking timidly at Sukey's face, which showed more signs of mirth than of pain; "they will not believe me, and then they will flog me.'

Sukey said she should go down to the sick house as soon as she could; and in the mean time began to hold her body and writhe herself about as if in great pain, while Robert mixed something in a calabash as Hester had seen him do before when he was lazy or bent on mischief,

and wanted to make himself ill for a short time to escape work. The little girl still lingered, saying—

"If you would go with me now, the surgeon would see that you are ill."

But Sukey flying at her in a passion, and Robert giving her a tremendous kick to hasten her departure, the child fled away through the wood at her utmost speed.

"Horner," said the surgeon to the overseer, when Hester had made her way through the crowd of reputed invalids who surrounded the door of the sick house, "what is the matter with Sukey? Where was she this morning?"

"At her work, and so merry I was obliged to make her hold her tongue. She was as well as I am two hours ago, and is now, I'll be bound for it."

"If she is not really ill, child," said the surgeon, "you shall be punished for bringing such a story."

"We'll make you really ill, I can tell you," Horner proceeded.

The child looked out wistfully, in hopes Sukey was coming to tell her own story. She was rejoiced to see Robert approaching with a solemn face and a calabash in his hand.

"Sukey is very bad, very bad," he protested. "She can't come; she can't walk; but if the surgeon will send her some physic, she hopes she can go to her work to-morrow."

And he displayed the contents of his calabash

—some stinking black stuff which he vowed she had just thrown up. The surgeon looked at it, and then jerked the liquor in the old rogue's face. Robert whined and muttered as he shook the perfume from his locks and wiped it from his nose and chin, but bowed humbly when the surgeon handed him a powder, and hobbled away to avoid further question. The little girl had already disappeared.

It was moonlight when she returned from delivering her bundle of cattle-feed. As she passed slowly before the fence of Cassius's ground, it seemed to her that it was not in its usual order. Another look showed her that the soil was as rough in some parts as if it had been dug up, and that the green crop was trampled and the leaves strewn about as if a herd of oxen had made their way through it. This might have been the case, as the gate stood open; and Hester stepped in to see. She started when she saw that somebody was there. Cassius stood, leaning his forehead against his low threshold, his arms folded on his breast. The child remained beside him for some minutes, hoping he would turn round, but as he did not, she gently pulled his jacket. He still took no notice. At last, a long deep sob broke from him, and the child, terrified at his agitation, ran away. He strode after her, and caught her at the gate. He held her with a strong grasp, as he cried—

"Who robbed my ground? You know, and you shall tell me. Don't dare to tell me a lie. Who robbed me?"

"Indeed, indeed, I don't know. I did not know you had been robbed."

"You did, you did. Why, don't you see?" he cried, as he dragged her from one plot to another, "here is not a potato left, the yams are all gone, and look at the plantain boughs torn down. Everything is spoiled. I have nothing to feed my pigs with. I have nothing to carry to market. I have no more money than I had a year ago. I shall not be free this year —nor the next—nor the next—nor——I wish I was dead. I shall never be free till then."

Hester did not understand what all this meant, so she remained silent and quiet.

"Child!" Cassius broke forth again, "do you want to be free? Do you know anybody that wants to be free?"

"I don't know what it is to be free," said the child, innocently.

"No, nor ever will," muttered Cassius. "It was not you that helped to rob me then. It is somebody else who wants a ransom by fair means or foul."

"You always gave me some fruit when I asked," said the child, "so why should I steal it? And I have been in the fields ever since dinner-time."

"And where have Robert and Sukey been?"

Instead of answering, Hester looked round for a way of escape. Her impatient companion shook an answer out of her.

"They beat me sometimes when I say where they are.

"I will beat you if you don't. No, no, I won't," said Cassius, relenting at the child's tears; "I never beat you, did I?"

"No, never; and I had rather anybody beat me than you; but you won't say that I saw you?"

"Not if you tell me all you know."

"Well; I don't know anything about your ground being robbed; but my master can tell you, I suppose, because he was watchman this afternoon, and I think my mistress stayed from work to help him, for she said she was ill."

"And is she ill?"

"Only the same as she always is, when she does not like to go to the field."

Cassius made no other answer to all Hester told him, than to bid her go home, as it was so late that Robert and Sukey would suspect her if she stayed longer.

Robert's door was fastened when the child got home; and when she called to be let in, her master cried out, that she should be punished in the morning for loitering; and that in the mean time she might get supper and sleep where she could, for he and Sukey would not get up to let her in. The child began to wail, but was threatened with a double flogging, if she did not hold her tongue and go to sleep at the door. She sat down on the ground to consider whether she dared go and ask shelter of Cassius, or whether she should lie down on the litter of straw beside Robert's dog, and try to keep herself warm in that manner. In a minute she heard a giggle from within, and

suspecting her master might not be in bed, she crept round to where the fire-light shone through a chink, and looking in, saw both the old people up and stirring. They seemed to be making a plentiful supper, and little heaps of yams and potatoes were lying about, which she had no doubt came out of Cassius's ground. It was by this time so very cold, and the sight of a fire was so tempting, that she determined to seek shelter with Cassius, resolving, however, with a prudence melancholy at her years, to say nothing of what she had seen, and hoping that the spoils would be put out of the way of discovery before the morning.

Cassius was not gone to bed, for he knew there would be no rest for him this night. It was a relief to him to have something to do; and he bestirred himself to heap wood on the fire, to get the child some supper, and to cover her up warm. He also promised to beg her off from the threatened flogging; so that the child was unusually happy at the end of her day's troubles, and got rest by pleasanter means than crying herself to sleep.

Cassius laid his complaint against the watchman as a watchman, as he had no means of proving him to be a thief; for Robert and Sukey had employed the night in removing all traces of their spoils, which, however, filled their pockets well the next market-day. Robert was slightly punished for negligence on his beat, in the face of all the many stories he had to tell of his unequalled excellence as a watchman, and of the

extraordinary difficulties which attended his duty on that particular day. By dint of repeated and pertinacious complaints, Cassius obtained some ungracious and imperfect redress, the overseer swearing at him for his obstinacy, and his master complaining of the interference of the law in his private property.

Mr. Mitchelson was perfectly correct in saying that planters are subject to an evil which their countrymen in England are free from, when the law interferes with private property; but that evil is chargeable upon the nature of the property. It is another branch of the mischief of the claimant and the infringer of the law being opposed to one another in one sense, while in another they constitute the same party.

An injured slave appeals to the law; the law decrees him redress; and the unwilling master, while he cannot set aside the decree, complains —and the complaint, though unjust, is true in fact—that the law intermeddles in the disposal of his private property.

This fact brings in another consideration, another instance of the reversal, in the case of slavery, of all common rules,—that slaves are better protected in despotic states than under a free government. Where there is least scruple about interfering with private property,—that is, where there is a despotic magistracy,—there will be the fewest considerations to oppose to the impulses of humanity. Where the slave-holder possesses the largest influence over public opinion,—where he is a member of a colonial

assembly, or an influential elector of such a member, or a possessor of any of those means of keeping the magistracy in check, which exist only under a free government, — there is the strongest probability of the magistrate's being tempted to stifle those complaints which he knows cannot be urged elsewhere if disallowed by him.

In the days of Augustus, one Vidius Pollio, in the presence of the emperor, ordered one of his slaves, who had committed some slight fault, to be cut in pieces and be thrown into his fish-pond to feed the fishes. The emperor thereupon commanded him to emancipate, immediately, not only that slave, but all the others that belonged to him.

In these days, no potentate can thus dispose of the property of a Briton; and it is well. But it is clearly just that while the Briton abjures despotic rule, he should hold none under him in such subjection as to need the interference of despotic vengeance for the redress of their wrongs.

To attempt to combine freedom and slavery is to put new wine into old skins. Soon may the old skins burst! for we shall never want for a better wine than they have ever held.

Chapter V.

NO HASTE TO THE WEDDING IN DEMERARA.

About this time there was occasion for a family consultation in old Mark's cottage; and it took place one day instead of the afternoon sleep, to which the family regularly composed themselves when dinner was done, except at such busy seasons as deprived them of the indulgence necessary to negroes.

Old Mark had talked on, as usual, all dinner time, his children listening to him as if he had been an oracle, except Nell, who, for once, seemed inattentive to her father, and full of her own thoughts. Becky observed upon this as soon as there was a pause, saying that she supposed Nell had had some scolding, or was likely to be punished for having spoiled some of her work that morning. Willy said that it was a different sort of speech that Nell had had made to her; and he laughed. Becky's face clouded over at once; for, much as she had to say about the compliments paid to herself, she knew that Nell had far more.—Nell was handsomer and more spirited than Becky; and they were about equally vain; so that, till they had each a lover, there were frequent quarrels between the sisters; and even since their rivalry had ceased, Becky was subject to pangs of envy as often as she heard of her sister being more admired than herself.

Nell now explained that their neighbour Harry had made up his mind at last to marry her if she chose; and she only waited to know what her father would say.

He shook his head, and asked how long it was since there had been a slave marriage on the estate. None of the young people remembered one on their plantation, but there had been one in the neighbourhood within ten years. Mark remembered that he had been happier with his wife than before he married her; and from his own experience, would have recommended his daughters to settle; but more and more difficulties had arisen since his young days about the consequences of slaves' marriages, and he was afraid to advise the step; especially as Willy was altogether against it, out of regard to his sister, and Becky, because her own lover would not promise to marry her. Willy did not speak for a long time, while his father went on prosing about how everybody would talk, and stare, and wonder, and whether it would please or displease their master, and lastly, whether Nell would be happier or less happy after it.

"If you will marry too, Willy——"

"I won't marry," said Willy, doggedly.

"Your master values you, and so it is most likely he would not be angry; and it would make people wonder less about Nell."

"They might well wonder at me. No, father; I saw what came of the marriage in the next plantation. It was just like no marriage."

"But there is a law now to make our marriages as lawful as white people's."

"To bind a man and his wife together as long as they are both slaves; but if the man gets free, the woman cannot go with him. His money is not hers because it is his; and if anybody buys her, her husband may not follow her unless his master allows it. They cannot do their children any good. They cannot make them free, nor save them from labour, nor help them to get justice."

"But there is a pleasure in living with a wife in a cottage, and in sowing corn together, and in making the fire for one another, and in having her to talk to, and to dance with, when holidays come."

Willy observed that all this might be done without being married, and was done by everybody on the plantation, who would have married if the civil rights of marriage had been allowed to them as to the whites.

"But you do every thing for yourself, Willy. You want nobody to sing to you, or to dance with you, or to go to market with you. You want nobody to love."

"I love you, father, and Nell, and Becky."

"But I shall die soon, and Nell will marry, and Becky loves her lover. It is time you should find somebody else to love."

"The time is past, father. I began to love Clara once, just before she died; and while I was forgetting my sorrow for her, I

learned by what I saw, never to love anybody else."

"Why, Willy?"

"Because a black must be first a slave and then a man. A white woman has nobody to rule her but her husband, and nobody can hurt her without his leave: but a slave's wife must obey her master before her husband; and he cannot save her from being flogged. I saw my friend Hector throw himself on the ground when his wife was put in the stocks; and then I swore that I would never have a wife."

"But think of Hector's children, Willy. O, you do not know the pleasure of hearing one's little children laugh in the shade, when the sun makes one faint at noon! It is like a wind from the north. And to let them sleep under the same mat, and to see them play like the whites, —and then their master pats their heads sometimes when they follow him."

"Like dogs," said Willy, "that as often get a kick as a kind word. When I see little children as clever and as merry as whites, I take them up in my arms and love them; but when they are carried away where their father shall never see them again, or when their mothers look sad to find them growing as stupid as we are, I am glad that I am not their father."

"Becky!" said her father, "are these the reasons that your lover will not marry you?"

Becky made no answer; for the fact was she knew nothing more than that he thought there was no occasion.

"Willy!" said the old man again, "if you will not love nor marry here, you will try to go somewhere where you can be a man and a husband without being a slave. You work in our ground. Is it that you may be free when I am dead?"

"No, father, I shall not try to be free."

"Why then do you sow corn and dig our ground for us? If you get money, why will you not pay it to be free?"

"I sow corn that you may have as good food as when you were young and could dig like me. I get money because others do so; but, unless it were many times as much, it does little good to me, for I shall never be free. The Englishmen, over the sea, tell us that they wish us to be free, and bid us try to buy our ransom; and when we have nearly done so, they put a higher price upon us, and laugh when we give up."

"How can people so far off raise our price?"

"They raise the price of sugars because our masters ask them, and then our masters raise our price. Hector once hoped to buy his freedom; and it made him happy to see his master look sad, because then he knew that his master could not sell his sugar, and did not want his slaves so much, and Hector hoped that no more sugar would be sold till his master had taken his ransom and let him go. But one day the overseer told him that his ransom was too low and he must not go yet. It was because his master wanted to make sugar again; and he wanted to make sugar because the people in England

pitied our masters, and made sugar dearer that they might be rich."

"If the whites in England pitied us," said Nell, "they would make sugar cheaper that we might be free."

"Till they do," said Willy, folding his arms, "I will be as I am, I will work no more than I cannot help. I will sleep all I can, that I may forget. I will love my father till he dies, and Nell and Becky till they have husbands that will love them more than I. Then, since I cannot love, I will hate; and I will call to the hurricane to bury me under my roof and set me free."

"You will love our young master, Willy? He did not forget you while he was beyond the sea, and he is a kind master now he has come back."

"I did not forget him," said Willy. "I remember how he made me play with him when we were both boys; but I did not love him then, because he was oftener my master than my playfellow; and I do not love him now, because he will be my master again. Don't ask me, father, to love anybody. Slaves cannot love."

Willy looked round for his sisters; but Nell was gone to Harry's cottage to tell him she would marry him, thus taking advantage of her brother's mention of husbands for herself and Becky. Becky had followed to see how Harry would take the communication. So Willy threw himself down on his mat as if going to sleep, while his father, whose ideas had been carried back to his

young days, sat at the door of the hut, singing to himself the song with which he had courted his long-buried wife.

Chapter VI.

MAN WORTH LESS THAN BEAST IN DEMERARA.

"What can be the matter with Mitchelson?" said Mr. Bruce one day, when his son was riding with him. "See what a hurry he is in, and how vexed he looks! He is in a downright passion with his favourite mare."

Mr. Mitchelson smoothed his countenance a little as he approached, but still looked sorely troubled. The cause of his vexation was soon told. His mill-dam had burst, and been carried away at a very critical season, and nothing could repay the loss of time before it could be restored. Time was everything in such a case.

"And how long will it take to repair it?" inquired Alfred.

"Three months,—three precious months, I expect."

"Is it possible?" said Alfred. "I cannot think it."

"You judge of everything, son, as if this were England," said Mr. Bruce. "Our people do not

turn off work like the labourers you have been accustomed to see."

"Mr. Mitchelson must know best, of course," replied Alfred; "but does your surveyor, or contractor, or whoever he be, bid you wait three months?"

"He will when he hears the story which I am now on my way to tell him. I can't stop, so good morning."

"Let me go with you,—may I?" said Alfred. "I like to see and hear everything I can."

Mr. Mitchelson professing himself glad of his company, Alfred turned his horse's head in search of the contractor.

While this important personage was musing and calculating, Mr. Mitchelson kept urging,—

"Time, you know, is everything. Anything to save time."

Alfred modestly suggested that it would be worth trying the experiment of making the slaves as much like English labourers for the occasion as possible. Mitchelson laughed at the idea; but asked the contractor how long the repairs would take if the number of slaves he meant to employ were English labourers?

"From twelve to fifteen days, I should think."

"And how long if they work like slaves in general?"

"Probably sixty days."

"Somewhat under the time I fixed in my own mind. You know, Alfred, I said three months at a round guess."

"I wish—I wish——" Alfred kept saying, half to himself.

"What do you wish?" said the contractor, who understood the value of labour, and suspected that he and Alfred were of the same way of thinking on that class of subjects; "what is it you wish?"

"Perhaps Mr. Mitchelson will laugh at me for the notion; but I wish he would let you and me manage this affair, as we shall agree; you pledging yourself for the cost, and I for the time. You shall arrange the work, and I will manage the slaves."

"In that case," replied the contractor, "I would engage to finish the repairs in twenty days."

"Twenty days!" cried Mitchelson. "My dear sir, you were more right in saying sixty. You will not do it under sixty. But you may try. I give you *carte blanche;* and to leave you perfectly free, I will go away. I want to go into Berbice, and I may as well do it now while our regular business is stopped."

The other contracting parties were by no means sorry for this. Alfred's partner returned with him, and operations were commenced immediately.

The main feature of Alfred's plan was to pay wages. He collected the men, told them what they had to do and expect, promised them warm clothing in case of their working early and late, showed them the ample provision of meat, bread, and vegetables he had stored at hand, marched them off, only staying behind to forbid the overseer to come within sight of the mill-dam, and

from that time never left the spot till the work was finished. Horner was very angry, and full of scorn and evil prognostications; but nobody cared except the poor women and children, upon whom he vented his ill-humour as long as he was deprived of his dominion over the able-bodied labourers.

Mr. Bruce arrived when the work was half done, to see how his son's speculation was likely to succeed. As he approached, he was struck with the appearance of activity so unusual in that region. The first sound he heard was a hum of voices, some singing, some talking, some laughing; for negroes have none of the gravity of English labourers. When they are not sullen they are merry; and now they showed that talk and mirth were no hinderance to working with might and main. Cassius toiled the hardest of all, and was the gravest; but he was happy: for this was an opportunity of increasing the fund for his ransom which he had little dreamed of. Alfred was talking with him, and lending a hand, as he did continually to one or another, when his father appeared.

"Bravo! son," cried Mr. Bruce, as Alfred ran to meet him. "You and your partner are doing wonders, I see. Will you fulfil your contract?"

"Very easily, sir, if weather remains favourable—(O! I forgot there was no fear of bad weather)—and if Mr. Mitchelson keeps out of the way, so that I may keep Horner and his whip out of the way also till we have done. The

family are all absent, you see; but I will step in with you while you rest yourself. I was surprised to find the ladies gone too when I arrived."

"Mitchelson always takes them with him when he is absent for more than a few hours."

Alfred thought within himself that he should not have suspected the gentleman of being so very domestic.

"But come," said Mr. Bruce, dismounting and fastening up his horse, "show me the secrets of your management. What are these barrels, and whence comes this savoury smell?"

"These barrels hold beef and pork, sir; and the savour is from the cooking in yonder hut."

"And what is your allowance per man?"

"As much as he chooses to eat. We should get little work done if we gave each labourer weekly no more than two pounds of herrings and eight pounds of flour, with the vegetables they grow themselves."

"The law pronounces that to be enough."

"But what says the law of nature? You and I do no hard work; and could we keep ourselves sleek and strong on such a supply of food?"

"Negroes do not want so much as whites."

"That is a good reason for their having as much as they do want. Our people here are not troubled with indigestion, as far as I can perceive. What do you think of our warm jackets?"

'I cannot imagine how they can support the

heat in such clothing. No wonder they throw them aside."

"They are only for morning and evening. The people scarcely seem to heed the morning fogs while they wear their woollens; and we make them put them on again when the sun sets——"

"Do you mean that they work after sunset of their own accord?"

"We have difficulty in making them leave off at nine o'clock. They like to sing to the moon as they work; and when they have done, they are not too tired for a dance. Father, you would more than pay for a double suit of clothing to your slaves by the improvement in their morning's work; and yet I believe you give them more than the law orders."

"Yes. One hat, shirt, jacket, and trowsers, cannot be made to last a year; and the clothing that the slaves buy for themselves is more for ornament than warmth. I do not know how the overseer clothes them, but I have always desired that they should have whatever was necessary."

Alfred said to himself that the overseer's notions of what was necessary might not be the best rule to go by.

Mr. Bruce meanwhile was looking alternately at two gangs of slaves at work after a rather different manner. He was standing on the confines of two estates; and, in a field at a little distance, a company of slaves was occupied as usual; that is, bending over the ground, but to all appear-

ance scarcely moving, silent, listless, and dull. At hand, the whole gang, from Cassius down to the youngest and weakest, were as busy as bees, and from them came as cheerful a hum, though the nature of their work rather resembled the occupation of beavers.

"Task-work with wages," said Alfred, pointing to his own gang; "eternal labour, without wages," pointing to the other. "It is not often that we have an example of the two systems before our eyes at the same moment. I need not put it to you which plan works the best."

"It is indeed very striking; but what can we do? We must hold labour as capital,—to put the question in the form you like best,—for our modes of cultivation require continuous labour. We cannot begin our tillage, and leave off and begin again, as may suit the pleasure of our labourers. We must have labour always at command."

"Undoubtedly; and which has the most labour at command at this moment,—Mitchelson, or the owner of those miserable drones yonder? And what is to prevent Mitchelson from having this efficient labour always at command if he uses the same means that have secured it now? Labour is the product of mind as much as of body; and, to secure that product, we must sway the mind by the natural means,—by motives. A man must learn to work from self-interest before he will work for the sake of another; and labouring against self-interest is what nobody ought to expect of white men,—much less of slaves."

"I am quite of your opinion there, and, in consequence, make my slaves as comfortable as I can. Of course, every man, woman, and child, would rather play for nothing than work for nothing."

"Then surely it is best for all parties to make the connexion between labour and its reward as clear as possible. I doubt whether any slave believes that his comforts depend on the value of his work. At any rate, he often sees that they do not. And this difficulty will for ever attend the practice of holding labourers as fixed capital."

"But the maintenance of their labour, son, is reproducible as much as if they were free."

"It is; in the same way as the subsistence of oxen and horses. In both cases it is consumed and reproduced with advantage: but cattle are fixed capital, and so are slaves. But slaves differ from cattle, on the one hand, in yielding (from internal opposition) a less return for their maintenance; and from free labourers, on the other, in not being acted upon by the inducements which stimulate production as an effort of mind as well as body. In all three cases the labour is purchased. In free labourers and cattle, all the faculties work together, and to advantage; in the slave they are opposed: and therefore he is, as far as the amount of labour is concerned, the least valuable of the three."

"And too often as to the quality of his labour also, son. A slave does some few things for us that cattle and machinery could not do; but he falls far short of a free labourer in all respects Our slaves never invent or improve."

"Why should they? No invention would shorten their toil, for they do no task-work. No improvement does them any good, for they have no share in the profits of their labour. They *can* invent and improve,—witness their ingenuity in their dwellings, and their skill in certain of their sports; but their masters will never possess their faculties, though they have purchased their limbs. Our true policy would be to divide the work of the slave between the ox and the hired labourer; we should get more out of the sinews of the one and the soul of the other, than the produce of double the number of slaves."

"I have sometimes wondered," said Mr. Bruce, "whether we do not lose on the whole by forbidding our slaves to raise exportable produce in their own grounds. They, being better adapted than ourselves to the soil and climate, might discover and practise modes of tillage from which we might gather many useful hints, which might more than repay what we should lose by their thefts."

"What you would lose by theft is a mere trifle," answered Alfred, "in the account of the cost of a negro. If they were free labourers, thieving as fast as opportunity would allow, (which being free labourers, they would not,) your blacks would cost you little in comparison of what they do now without thieving."

"How do you know?"

"I took pains to calculate the cost of a slave before I left England; and I have had the means of proving my calculation by the expe-

rience of my friend yonder, the contractor, who has had more opportunity than most people I know of mastering both sides of the question."

"Does he speak of slaves newly imported, or of those born and bred on the estate? for that makes a vast difference."

"We have reckoned both. Those imported were, of course, by far the dearest; for, in addition to the usual cost, we had to defray the expenses, in life and money, of wars on the coast of Africa, and of conveying them across the ocean, the loss under the seasoning when they arrived, and the revenue to the African trader; and, after all, they are worth less than those bred on the spot, from being unacquainted with the language, and unused to the kinds of labour in which they were to be employed."

"I never was one to advocate the importation of slaves; it is so clear that the expenses of their rearing are much less than those attending their transport. But I really do not think the cost of maintaining slaves can be greater than that of free labourers. They must both eat and drink, you know, and be clothed and housed."

"True, father; and the question therefore is, whether their maintenance can be managed the more economically by their own contrivance when they have an interest in saving, or by their master's pinching them when they have an interest in wasting his property. The free labourer has every inducement to manage his field or other possession frugally, and to husband whatever produce he may obtain. You need only look

into the state of our slave acres, to see how different the case is there. The cultivation is negligently performed, the produce stolen or wasted, so that we reap scarcely a third of the natural crop. In both cases, the master pays the subsistence of the labourer, but the slave-owner pays in addition for theft, negligence, and waste."

"Well but, Alfred, give me the items. Tell me the value of a healthy slave at twenty-one?"

"I believe his labour will be found at least 25 per cent. dearer than free labour. From birth to fifteen years of age, including food, clothing, life-insurance, and medicine, he will be an expense; will not he?"

"Yes. The work he does will scarcely pay his insurance, medicine, and attendance, leaving out his food and clothing; but from fifteen to twenty-one, his labour may just defray his expenses."

"Very well; then food and clothing for fifteen years remain to be paid; the average cost of which per annum being at the least 6*l*., he has cost 90*l*. over and above his earnings at twenty-one years. Then if we consider that the best work of the best field-hand is worth barely two-thirds of the average field-labour of whites,—if we consider the chances of his being sick or lame, or running away, or dying,—and that if none of these things happen, he must be maintained in old age, we must feel that property of this kind ought to bring in at least 10 per cent. per annum interest on the capital laid out upon

him. Whether the labour of a black, amounting to barely two-thirds of that of a white labourer, defrays his own subsistence, his share of the expense of an overseer and a driver, and 10 per cent. interest on 90*l.*, I leave you to say."

"Certainly not, son, even if we forget that we have taken the average of free labour, and the prime of slave labour. We have said nothing of the women, whose cost is full as much, while their earnings are less than the men's. But you overlook one grand consideration;—that whites cannot work in the summer time in this climate and on this soil."

"It is only saying 'free black' instead of 'white.' The tenure of the labour is the question, not the colour of the labourers, as long as there is a plentiful supply of whichever is wanted. Only let us look at what is passing before our eyes, and we shall see whether negroes working for wages, or even under tribute, are not as good labourers as whites."

"I have often meditated adopting the plan of tribute, Alfred, since times have gone badly with me; but it is difficult on a coffee plantation. If I were in Brazil, the proprietor of a gold mine, or at Panama, the lord of a pearl-fishery, I would adopt their customs. I would supply my slaves with provisions and tools, and they should return me a certain quantity of gold or pearls, and keep the surplus."

"That is one way of making them work by fair means, father. It is an important approach

to emancipation, as I believe it was found in Russia. It seems, too, an excellent preparative for a state of freedom ; and surely such a preparative would never have been adopted, and would not have been allowed to proceed to entire emancipation, if such comparative freedom had not been advantageous to the master as well as the slave. It is a strong argument, brought forward by slave-holders, in favour of emancipation."

" But the plan could not be tried on a coffee plantation, son—that is the worst of it. If we lived in the neighbourhood of a large town, I would attempt it on a small scale. Some of my slaves should let their labour, paying me a weekly tribute, and keeping whatever they earned over and above. This is done in places south and west of us on this continent, as a Spanish friend of mine was telling me lately."

" Suppose we try task work instead, father?"

" I have no other objection than this, son. If the experiment did not answer, there would be no getting the slaves back to the present system."

" A strong argument against the present system, father; but not the less true for that: suppose then we try with some new employment. If the blacks are as stupid as they are thought to be here, we need not fear their carrying the principle out any farther than we wish. Suppose we make bricks by task-work. Why should we import them, when we have abundance of brick clay on the estate and labour to spare?"

"It has been found to answer better to import them."

"Who says so?"

"Mr. Herbert, my old neighbour. He had not straw enough, to be sure, growing, as he does little besides sugar."

"Ah; the bounty is all in all with these sugar-growers, father. They keep their eye fixed on that bounty, and give no other article of production a fair chance. Besides, I suppose he did not try task-work?"

"Not he. But consider, Alfred, how very little the freight is; and then, there is the fuel."

"The fuel is easily had; and a ton of coal will serve for eight tons of bricks. We are better supplied with straw than if we raised sugars only; and the apparatus is not expensive. Only consider, father: the labour of your slaves, at present, does not average more than fifteen pence a day; and brickmakers, in England, make from five to seven shillings a day. Do let me try whether, by working by count, we cannot raise the value of our slave-labour, and save the expense of importation."

"But, my dear son, we do not want bricks enough to make it worth while."

"Our neighbours want them as well as ourselves; and it may answer well to withdraw a permanent portion of labour from our coffee-walks and transfer it to our brick-field. The art is not difficult, and the climate is most favourable, so confidently as we may reckon on the absence of heavy rains for weeks together."

"Well; we will see about it, son."

"I give you warning, father," said Alfred, laughing, "that I shall not be content with one experiment. If we save by brickmaking, I shall propose our making the bagging and packages for our coffee at home, instead of paying so high as we do for them."

"Nay, Alfred; what becomes of your boasted principle of the division of labour?"

"I think as highly as ever of it where labour is as productive as it ought to be. But where eight free labourers do as much work as twelve slaves, it follows that if those twelve slaves were set free, four of them would be at leisure for more work. If as much sugar was raised already as was wanted, those four labourers might make a great saving by refining and claying the sugars at home; which business is now done elsewhere."

"In the Spanish colonies, where there is a large proportion of free labourers, I know they do many things among themselves which British planters do not, and thus reduce the cost of cultivation in a way that we should be very glad to imitate."

"Such imitation is easy enough, surely. We have only to introduce as large a proportion of free labour."

"The wages of free labour are so dreadfully high," objected Mr. Bruce.

"Only in proportion to the scarcity of free labour, I believe, father. Wherever there is little of a good thing, it is dear, according to the

general rule. Slave-labour is not only dear in itself, but it makes free labour dear also; and gives an undue advantage to free labourers at the expense of the other two parties. If we would but allow natural principles of supply and free competition to work, the rights of all parties would be equalized.—But there is Horner hovering at a distance and looking as if he longed to come and whip us all round. I must keep him off, or he will spoil our work. The very sight of him is enough to paralyse my men; they absolutely hate him."

"And well they may," observed Mr. Bruce. "I cannot think what makes Mitchelson keep that man in his service. Even my overseer, who knows the nature of the business well, calls him a brute."

Alfred told his father, in a low voice, that he should think it his duty to get this man discharged as soon as possible; for he was so enraged at the adoption of a new plan, and at its evident success, that it was too probable he would ill-treat the slaves to the utmost as soon as he had them again in his power.

"He cannot vent his revenge upon me," said Alfred, "and will therefore pour it out upon them; and since I have done the deed, I must look to the consequences. Having taken these poor creatures under my care, I must see that they do not fall back into a worse state than before. I will not quit Mr. Mitchelson's side till I have seen him change his overseer."

Mr. Bruce shook his head, and made some grave remarks upon the imprudence of making enemies. He did not perceive, and his son did not remind him, that for his one new enemy he had secured a posse of grateful friends.

Mr. Mitchelson and his family returned punctually on the twenty-first day. The dam was, to their great surprise, finished, the mill fit for use, the slaves in good plight, the contractor satisfied and gone home, and all at a less cost than would have secured the reluctant labour of as many hands for sixty days;—to say nothing of the vast advantage of avoiding a suspension of the usual operations on the estate. Mr. Mitchelson being, of course, pleased, all was right, except that Horner snatched every opportunity of oppressing and thwarting the people under him; and it was no easy matter to get him dismissed. He was foolish enough to let fall words in the hearing of the slaves, which showed that he was aware he owed his situation to his master's favour only, and that he owed Alfred a grudge. The natural consequence, among a people perfectly ignorant, and yet subject to human passions, was that they adored Alfred, and hated Mr. Mitchelson and his overseer with an intense and almost equal hatred.

Chapter VII.

CHRISTIANITY DIFFICULT IN DEMERARA.

Mr. Mitchelson told his young friend that he must not think of leaving Paradise at present. "You have served me in one way," he said, "and you now must do it in another. You have built up my mill-dam, and now you must give me the pleasure of your society. I shall be little flattered, if you give me to understand that you prefer intercourse with my slaves to associating with me and my family."

Alfred was quite disposed to remain at Paradise for a few days; and they were made days of festivity, according to the hospitable customs of the West Indies. An excursion was planned for one day, the main object of which was to inspect an estate, now to be let on lease, for which Mr. Mitchelson had been authorised by a friend to negotiate. The ladies of the family cared little for the estate; but there was some pretty country a little way beyond which Alfred had never seen, and which they visited to show him. A party of pleasure was therefore formed, and all the elegant accompaniments of such an arrangement were provided in profusion. The ladies in carriages, the gentlemen on horseback, set out in the cool of the morning, saw all they meant to see, dined luxuriously at the house

belonging to the plantation which Mr. Mitchelson had been left behind to survey, and returned in good time in the evening. Alfred was rather surprised at the anxiety of the ladies not to be delayed beyond a certain hour, and remembered how apt parties of pleasure in England are to transgress in this respect: how faithfully they promise to be home "by ten, at latest," and how fidgetty grandfathers, or anxious mothers, or officious servants, sit at home listening for carriage wheels, start when the clock strikes eleven, groan when it comes to twelve, and forgive everything when the weary, unsociable, young folks are at last safely housed, and yawn a good night to each other, leaving everything to be told the next day. The most unaccountable thing of all to him, was the extraordinary prudence of the young people.

"Come, Alfred," said Mr. Mitchelson, "we can go so much faster than the carriage this cool afternoon, that it is a pity you should not see a fine sea-view there is behind the wood there. You like a sea-view, I know."

"O papa!" exclaimed Miss Grace, as she saw them turning their horses, "what are you going to do? You do not mean to leave us!"

"Only for half an hour, my dear. We shall join you where the roads meet."

There was a general cry from the ladies that it was too late for the party to separate. Mr. Mitchelson urged that the carriages could take care of each other, and that he and Alfred could come to no harm, for he knew the road perfectly,

—a fine open road, except one bit that led through a wood;—and the gentlemen trotted off without more controversy.

It was true that the road could not be missed. It was true that, as Mr. Mitchelson protested, the view was fine enough to have tempted them twice as far out of their way; but it was not so true that he was clear about the way back. He thought he was, or he would not have ventured; and for a considerable way he guided his young friend confidently, and congratulated himself on having suggested so pleasant a variety in their journey home. But changes had been made since he last went over the ground; changes which he was long in perceiving, and of which he was not fully convinced till he had become completely bewildered about the direction in which he was proceeding. They had entered an extensive wood of which he remembered nothing: the road branched off, and he did not know whether to go right or left; and, what was worse, both roads were found to become wilder and less marked, till they ended in being no road at all. There was nothing for it but to go back; a proceeding which seemed to Alfred so easy, that he was astonished at the nervous agitation of his companion, who alternately checked and urged on his horse, talked fast, or would say nothing, and at last appeared so irritable as well as panic-struck, that Alfred despaired of managing him, and let him take his own way about what should be done. As might be expected, he lost the track again. They

became more involved in shade than ever, and the short twilight of that climate was darkening every moment.

If Alfred had been alone, or favoured with a more manly and agreeable companion, he would have thought it no great hardship to be obliged to pass the night in the woods of such a country as this. There could be no richer bower than the foliage around him; no lamps in a pillared hall so beautiful as the fire-flies that began already to flit among the columnar stems which retired in long perspective on every hand; no perfumes more delicious than the fragrance of the pimento, borne through the groves by the whispering night-wind; no canopy so splendid as the deep blue heaven where the constellations appeared magnified as if the powers of the eye had been strengthened, where the milky-way seemed paved with planets, and where Venus rose like a little moon, and in the absence of the greater, casting a distinguishable shadow from trunk and waving bough. Alfred's heart leaped at the idea of watching, in so favourable a situation, the solemn march of night, and repairing before the dawn to the plains whence he might see the first sunbeams kiss the ocean. He could perceive no danger, and he felt no want. He could pluck grass for a bed; he could light a fire, if it should be necessary; and both had so lately eaten that there was no fear of being starved before morning. He turned to his companion, who had thrown himself from his horse upon the ground; but Mitchelson's countenance looked so

gloomy in the dim light, that his young friend hesitated to address him.

"Lord have mercy upon us!" groaned Mitchelson. "What may happen if we cannot get home?"

"I was not aware there was any danger," replied Alfred. "What is our danger? not wild beasts, nor cold, nor hunger; we can light a fire——"

"O! my poor wife. O! my children. Their friends will leave them, supposing we are coming."

"I am sorry for the fright they will have," said Alfred; "but surely they will not think any great harm can befall us before morning?"

"O! what may not have happened before morning? Alfred, I had rather you and I had to battle with wild beasts than women with slaves. If the wretches find out my absence——"

The cause of all this terror now flashed upon Alfred: the same cause which made Mitchelson carry his family with him wherever he went. He was afraid to leave his household in the power of his slaves. Yet this was the country where (so people are told in England) slaves are contented and happy, and, in every respect, better off than the free peasantry of the empire! This was the country whose proprietors dared to complain of the inefficiency of British law for the security of property! The present was not the moment, however, for venting his indignation, or pointing to the obvious truths which stared him in the face. Alfred looked on his terrified com-

panion as he sat trembling on the trunk of a fallen tree, and felt nothing but pity. He could not triumph while he knew that the unhappy man was scared with visions of burning cane-fields, of a murdered wife and insulted children.

"Do not let us give up, if you are really very anxious to get home," said Alfred gently. "I can guide you a little way back, I believe; and if you will but compose yourself, you may observe some familiar object before long which will help us into the right track. We may yet be home before midnight."

It was past midnight, however, and the moon was high in the heaven before they got out of the wood and found themselves on a road—not the one they wanted, but one which would lead them home at length, after a circuit of a few miles. Mitchelson's countenance, as seen by the moonlight, was pale and haggard, and the horses were so weary that they stumbled continually. Alfred, too, was sufficiently fatigued to be glad to be relieved from all difficulty but that of going straight forward as well as he could, and from all obligation to converse. He looked at his companion from time to time, fearing that he might drop from his horse; for Mitchelson, never strong, and exposed during the whole day to unusual fatigue, was ill prepared for an adventure like the present, and appeared utterly exhausted. Alfred looked about in vain for any place where they might stop for a few minutes to refresh themselves. There were none but clusters of negro-huts here and there, where all was silent and mo-

tionless, except that smoke curled up from the roofs in little white clouds as the silvery light fell upon them. Mitchelson would not hear of calling up any one to furnish a calabash of water, or any more substantial refreshment; and he seemed particularly uneasy while in the neighbourhood of these dwellings, starting whenever a bough dangled in the breeze, and casting a suspicious glance into the shadows as he urged his horse forwards. He appeared more in a hurry than ever, though he actually tottered in his saddle, as they came to a place which seemed to Alfred as if he had seen it before.

"Surely," said Alfred, "this is your own estate. Yes, that hut is Cassius's. You shall go no further till you have eaten and drunken, or I shall have you fainting by the road-side."

So saying, he dismounted, and fastened his horse to some palings at a little distance from the hut. Mitchelson tried by word and gesture to restrain him; but Alfred, who thought his companion in no condition to take care of himself, was decided.

"Fear nothing," he said, "Cassius and I are good friends, and it will give him pleasure to be of service to us."

He approached softly, and his footsteps were not heard, though Cassius was awake, and somewhat differently engaged from what might have been expected at such a time of night.

When Alfred reached the threshold, he thought he heard the murmurs of a voice within, and stepped round to the opening, which served for a

window, to observe for his guidance what was passing within. Cassius was alone: it was his voice that Alfred had heard. His night-fire was smouldering on the earthen floor, and he was kneeling beside it, his arms folded, his head drooped on his breast, except now and then when he looked up with eyes in which blazed a much brighter fire than that before him. A flickering blaze now and then shot up from the embers, and showed that his face was bathed with tears or perspiration, and that his strong limbs shook as if an icy wind was blowing upon him.

Alfred had often wondered, while in England, what Christianity could be like in a slave country. Since he arrived in Demerara he had heard tidings of the Christian teacher who had resided there for a time, which gave him a sufficiently accurate notion of the nature of his faith and of that of the planters; but he was still curious to know how the Gospel was held by the slaves. He had now an opportunity of learning, for Cassius was at prayer. These were snatches of his prayer.

"May he sell no sugar, that no woman may die of the heat and hard work, and that her baby may not cry for her. If Christ came to make men free, let him send a blight that the crop may be spoiled; for when our master is poor, we shall be free. O Lord! make our master poor: make him sit under a tree and see his plantation one great waste. Let him see that his canes are dead, and that the wind is coming to blow down his house and his woods; and then he will say to

us, 'I have no bread for you, and you may go.' O, God! pity the women who cannot sleep this night because their sons are to be flogged when the sun rises. O, pity me, because I have worked so long, and shall never be free. Do not say to me, 'You shall never be free.' Why shouldst thou spare Horner who never spares us? Let him die in his sleep this night, and then there will be many to sing to thee instead of wailing all the night. We will sing like the birds in the morning if thou wilt take away our fear this night. If Jesus was here, he would speak kindly to us, and, perhaps, bring a hurricane for our sakes. O, do not help us less because he is with thee instead of with us! We have waited long, O Lord! we have not killed any one: we have done no harm, because thou hast commanded us to be patient. If we must wait, do thou give us patience; for we are very miserable, and our grief makes us angry. If we may not be angry, be thou angry with one or two, that a great many may be happy."

These words caught Alfred's ear amidst many which he could not hear. In deep emotion, he was about to beckon his companion to come and listen too, when he found he was already at his elbow.

"Stand and hear him out," whispered Alfred. "You will do him no harm, I am sure. You will not punish a man for his devotions, be their character what it may. Let Cassius be master for once. Let him teach us that which he understands better than we. He seems to have

thought more than you or I on what Christ would say to our authority if He were here. I will go in when he rises, and hear more."

"For God's sake, do not trust yourself with him. Let us go. Don't ask him for water, or anything else. I will have nothing,—I am going home this moment."

"Then I will follow," said Alfred, knocking at the door of the hut as soon as he saw that Cassius had risen and was about to replenish his fire.

"Cassius, I have overheard some of your prayers," he said, when he had explained to the astonished slave the cause of his appearance. "I was glad when you told me that you had been made a Christian; but your prayer is not that of a Christian. Surely this is not the way you were taught to pray?"

"We were told to pray for the miserable, and to speak to God as our Father, and tell him all that we wish. I know none so miserable as slaves, and therefore I prayed that there might be an end of their misery. I wish nothing so much as that I and all slaves may be free, and so I prayed for it. Is it wrong to pray for this?"

"No. I pray for the same thing, perhaps, as often as you; but——

"Do you? Do you pray the same prayer as we do?" cried the slave, falling at Alfred's feet, and looking up in his face. "Then let us be your slaves, and we will all pray together."

"I wish to have no slaves, Cassius: I would rather you should be my servants, if you worked

for me at all. But we could not pray the same prayer while you ask for revenge. How dared you ask that the overseer might die, and that your master might be poor, and see his estate laid waste, when you know Jesus prayed for pardon for his enemies, and commanded us to do them good when we could?"

"Was it revenge?" asked Cassius. "I did not mean it for revenge; but I can never understand what prayer would best please God. I would not pray for my master's sorrow and Horner's death if it would do nobody any good, or even nobody but me; but when I know that there would be joy in a hundred cottages if there was death in the overseer's, may I not pray for the hundred families? And if I know that the more barren the land grows, the more the men will eat, and the women sing, and the children play, and the sooner I myself shall be free, may I not pray that the land may be barren? And as the land grows barren, my master grows poor. You know the Gospel better than I do. Explain this to me."

Alfred did his best to make it clear that, while blessings were prayed for, the means should be left to Divine wisdom: but though Cassius acquiesced and promised, it was plain he did not see why he should not take for granted the suitableness of means which appeared to him so obvious. When Alfred heard what provocation he had just received, he had only wondered at the moderation of his petitions, and the patience with which he bore reproof. Horner had given him

notice the preceding evening, that as it appeared from his exertions at the mill-dam, that he was of more value than he had always pretended, his ransom should be doubled. In such a ca e, a prayer for such low prices as would lessen his own value was the most natural that could burst from the lips of a slave.

Alfred resolved, in his own mind, to obtain justice for Cassius, but refrained from exciting hopes which it might be out of his power to realize. He cheered the slave by accepting food and drink from him, and by imparting to him that luxury which it is to be hoped visits this class of beings more frequently than formerly,—sympathy. When Cassius came out to hold the stirrup for Alfred, he looked with a smile at the moon, and said that there would be time for himself to sleep before the gong should sound, and yet more for the gentleman, who need not mind the gong.

Alfred's horse had been grazing to such good purpose during the conversation with Cassius, that he carried his master home without another stumble.

Chapter VIII.

THE PROUD COVET PAUPERISM IN DEMERARA.

It was well that Alfred had held out no expectation to Cassius that his ransom would be lowered, or to anybody that the overseer would be dismissed. Mr. Mitchelson was willing to promise everything to any person under whose influence he might be at the time; but as fear had been his predominant passion ever since the days of the insurrection which once happened on his estate, and as Horner had found some means of making him afraid of him, there seemed little hope that any counter-influence would be of any avail. Alfred continued to hover about the plantation, however, and to give the slaves who had been exposed to increased hardship by his means, the protection of his occasional presence, till he was called away for a time, and obliged to leave his charge to the tender mercies of their enemy, while he undertook a yet more pressing responsibility. The Barbadoes' estate became his, and it was necessary that he should proceed to the spot.

"I wish I could make you think of returning to live with us, my dear son," said Mr. Bruce. "You see we cannot possibly break up our establishment and come to you. Why cannot you

arrange your concerns, and then leave them to an agent, like other people?"

"He will, I am sure," added his mother, "if he has any idea how we dread losing him. Mary, love, you have more influence than anybody with your brother; you can persuade him to return to us."

Mary looked up through her tears, while she replied that she believed her brother had long weighed the duty of living on his estate against other claims; and she hoped he would do what he thought right, and then it was certain he would come back if he could.

Alfred declared that it was a great grief to him to leave his family so soon, and that he should return as speedily and as often as possible to visit them; but that he could not promise to reside permanently anywhere but on his own estate.

His father observed that there were plenty of agents to be had, and that he was sorry some friends of his in England had prejudiced his son against management by agents.

Alfred observed that, believing, as he did, that the non-residence of proprietors was the curse of the West Indies, he could not conscientiously add his weight to the burden. Neither was he at all sure that he could afford the heavy expenses of agency, or that any of the plans for which he had been expressly educated could be fairly tried without his superintendence. Whatever might be the honesty and obedience of an agent, and however strong his own confi-

dence in one recommended by his father, it was impossible that any man should discern his views so clearly or take so warm an interest in their issue, as himself. It appeared to him that a critical period in the state of his slave population had arrived, and he could not forgive himself if he gave the management into other hands.

"I am glad you are aware," said his father, "that Barbadoes is little like Demerara. What you have seen here affords no rule for what you are to do there."

"One kind of rule, perhaps," said Alfred, smiling; "the rule of contrary. Here soils are fertile, there barren; here the slave population decreases as rapidly as it increases there; here slaves are very valuable, there they are worth little; here they are manumitted at the average of 27, there of 125 in a year, the impediment of a heavy tax remaining in each."

"Then you had rather have an estate in Barbadoes than here," said Mary, "whatever your profits may be?"

"Much rather. Slavery, like other institutions, is only enforced where it is worth enforcing; and since it is found less worth enforcing in Barbadoes than elsewhere, I shall meet with the less opposition to measures which I should have adopted wherever my estate had happened to lie. I do not despair of inducing some of my neighbours to make free labourers of their blacks, if, as I expect, they already find that they are of little value as slaves."

"The reason why they are so little valuable,'

said Mr. Bruce, "is that there is less sugar grown in Barbadoes than in any of the colonies which grow sugar at all."

"True," said Alfred. "The soil of Barbadoes produces less sugar; the planters therefore profit less by the bounty on sugars: they are less tempted to overwork their slaves, and to reduce their provision-grounds to the narrowest limits prescribed by law; the slaves therefore increase beyond the proportion wanted for the land, and of course obtain their freedom easily. The exact reverse is the case here. Here the most sugar is grown, the largest share of the bounty taken, the slaves most overworked and underfed, their numbers decreasing, their value increasing, and their freedom the most difficult to achieve."

Mary looked up from her work, observing that the bounty was then the great obstacle to emancipation.

"The one obstacle," replied her brother, "without which no other could stand for an hour. Louisa, my dear, bring me a map of the world."

"Of the world!" exclaimed the little girl; "I could show you the way to Barbadoes with a much smaller map than that."

"You shall teach me the way to Barbadoes afterwards; I want the larger map first. Look here, Mary. See here what the whole world owes to British legislation on the sugar trade! Let us first find out to what extent sugar might be grown if we had to consider climate only."

"I have always wondered," said Mary, "why

there was no sugar grown in Africa, or in any part of South America but the little angle we inhabit. So it might be anywhere within that line."

"Anywhere (as far as climate is concerned) within thirty degrees of the equator. There are duties which prohibit the English from purchasing sugar from China, New Holland, the Indian Archipelago, Arabia, Mexico, and all South America, but our little corner here; and from Africa none is to be had either. The slave-trade has destroyed all hope of that, independently of all restrictions. The slave-trade has been like a plague in Africa."

"Well, but you have passed over Hindostan."

"The trade is not absolutely prohibited there; but it is restricted and limited by high duties."

"What remains then?"

"Only our corner of the world, and a tiny territory it is, to be protected at the expense of such vast tracts—only the West India Islands, and a slip of the continent."

"But surely it is a hardship on the inhabitants of these other countries, to be prevented supplying the British with sugars?"

"It is a hardship to all parties in turn—to the British, that the price is artificially raised, and the quantity limited; to the inhabitants of these vast tracts, that they are kept out of the market; to the West India planters; but most of all, to the slaves."

"To the planters? Why, I thought it was for their sakes that the monopoly was ordered!"

"So it is; but they suffer far more than they

gain by it. The cultivation of sugar is at present a forced cultivation, attended with expense and hazard, and only to be maintained by a mono poly price, both high and permanent.

"Look at Mitchelson's plantation, and see whether its aspect is that of a thriving property! A miserable hoe, used by men and women with the whip at their backs, the only instrument used in turning up the soil, while there are such things in the world as drill ploughs and cattle! A soil exhausted more and more every year! A population decreasing every year, in a land and climate most favourable to increase! Are these signs of prosperity? Yet all these are the consequence of a monopoly which tempts to the production of sugar at all hazards, and at every cost.

"I see how all these evils would disappear, brother, if the trade were free; but could the proprietors stand the shock? Could they go through the transition?'

"O yes; if they chose to set about it properly, living on their own estates, and making use of modern improvements in the management of the land. If the soil were improved to the extent it might be, the West Indies might compete with any country in the world. The planter would estimate his property by the condition of his land, and not by the number of his slaves. He would command a certain average return from the effective labour he would then employ, instead of the capricious and fluctuating profits he now derives from a species of labour which it

is as impolitic as guilty to employ; and, as the demand for sugar would continually increase, after the effects of free competition had once been felt, there would be no fear of a decline of trade. A soil and climate like this are sufficient warrants that the West Indies may trade in sugar to the end of the world, if a fair chance is given by an open trade."

"Then if economy became necessary, there would be no slaves; for it is pretty clear that slave labour is dear."

"Slavery can only exist where men are scarce in proportion to land; and as the population would by this time have increased, and be increasing, slavery would have died out. At present, land is abundant, fertile, and cheap in Demerara, and labour decreases every year; so that slaves are valuable, and their prospect of emancipation but distant. But in my estate, as I have told you, the land is by far less fertile, labour more abundant, and slavery wearing out. My exertions will be directed towards improving my land, and increasing the supply of labour; by which I shall gain the double advantage of procuring labour cheap, and hastening the work of emancipation. I hope no new monopoly will be proposed, which should tempt me to change my plan, and aid and abet slavery."

"I can trust you," said Mary, smiling. "You would not yield to the temptation."

"I trust not, sister: but I will not answer for the effect of living long in a slave country. The very sight of slavery is corrupting, to say nothing

of the evil of holding property under the system. But I feel resolute enough at this moment."

"Remember, my dear son," said Mr. Bruce, "that you may find, as many find, that principles which seem very clear when only reasoned on, turn out very differently when applied to practice. There is your principle that you argue upon, as if it was a settled matter, that high prices stimulate supply——"

"Well, father, what of it? Is it not true, when things take their natural course?"

"I only know that it is not true here, if what you have been saying is true. The high prices you complain of lessen instead of increasing the supply of labour! Did not you say so?'

"I did; and I think the fact only shows that labour is not supplied in its natural course. You see the principle operates naturally upon the masters. It stimulates *them* to the production of sugar to such a degree as to ruin their soils; and if the supply of labour fails in proportion to the rise of prices, it proves,—not that a principle is false, which holds good everywhere else,—but that the peculiar kind of labour used here is not rightly held or naturally recompensed. This is only another of the many reversals of all allowed rules, which are so striking to those who watch West Indian policy from a distance. We might make another picture out of it for our new Topsy Turvy."

"I would make two pictures," said Mary. "John Bull comes with a high price in his hand to buy sugar of a free labourer, who works harder

and harder, grows rich, and employs a tribe of labourers under him. John Bull brings the same price to a slave. He pines and will not work: the price is lessened; he brightens, works, eats, and grows fat. It dwindles to nothing, and he leaps for joy, snaps his fingers in his master's face, and hugs John Bull with might and main."

Alfred laughed while he admitted this to be a true picture. In answer to an objection from his father, that slaves were not fit to employ and enjoy freedom, he mentioned the remarkable fact that scarcely any free blacks receive parish relief in comparison with whites, though their civil and political disabilities are such as to impose great hardships upon them. If, in an average of six years, including the whole of our West Indian colonies, it be found, (and it has been proved,) that out of a free black and coloured population of 88,000, only one in 387 has received even occasional parish relief, while, out of a white population of 63,400, one in 38 has been so relieved, it is pretty plain that the manumitted slaves are not too vicious or idle to take care of themselves; and there is an end to the common objection to manumission, that the freed slaves must increase the burden of pauperism.

It had frequently occurred to Alfred, that forebodings of pauperism came with a very ill grace from a body who subsist on the most expensive pauper establishment ever invented. The West India monopoly is a most burdensome poor-rate, levied by compulsion, and bestowed on those who ought to maintain themselves. It operates

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as poor-rates always do, in producing discontents among those who pay, and indolence, recklessness, waste, and profligacy, among those who receive it, together with incessant and greedy demands for further assistance. The main difference is, that the West India paupers might and would flourish, if the mother country could be prevailed upon to withhold the alms so clamorously craved; which is more, alas! than can be said in the case of parish paupers. Alfred thought that this consideration would for ever strengthen him to stem the current of public opinion, which, however narrow and foul, runs so strongly in the West Indies as to require the force of a strong mind to keep its place in it. Happen what might, he could never submit to be a pauper.

He hoped, however, that the days of strong temptation were over,—that slavery was a perishing system,—a system that must perish ere long under any kind of management. High prices, rich lands, and scarcity of people, in conjunction, he argued, are the only supports of slavery.

High prices exhaust lands; so there is a prospect of an end of slavery this way.

Moderate prices cause an increase of people; so there is the same prospect this way.

Low prices only effect the same end more rapidly.

So, with a clear conviction that slavery must, at all events, come to an end, Alfred set sail for Barbadoes. The chief object of his going was to learn what he could do to hasten the wished-for day.

Chapter IX.

CALAMITY WELCOME IN DEMERARA.

There was every promise of a fine crop this season in Mr. Bruce's plantation. The coffee-walks had been refreshed by frequent showers, and were screened from the chill north winds; and the fruit looked so well that, as the owner surveyed his groves the day before the gathering began, he flattered himself with the hopes of a crop so much above the average as might clear off some of the debts which began to press heavily upon him.

His daughters remained at his side during the whole of this cheerful season; for Mary had but a faint remembrance, which she wished to revive, of its customs and festivities. The time of crop is less remarkable and less joyous in a coffee than a sugar plantation; but there is much in both to engage the eye and interest the heart. The sugar crop had been got in three months before, and Mary had then visited the Mitchelsons, and seen how marvellously the appearance of the working population, both man and beast, had improved in a very short time. Horses, oxen, mules, and even pigs, had fattened upon the green tops of the cane and upon the scum from the boiling-house; while the meagre and sickly among the slaves recovered their looks rapidly while they had free access to the nourish-

ing juice which oozed from the mill. The abundance of food more than made up for the increase of labour; and the slaves, while more hardly worked than ever, seemed to mind it less, and to wear a look of cheerfulness sufficiently rare at other seasons.

There was less apparent enjoyment to all parties at the time of gathering in the coffee, though it was a sight not to be missed by a stranger. The slaves could not grow fat upon the fruit of the coffee-tree as upon the juice of the cane; but as there was an extra allowance of food in consideration of the extra labour, the slaves went through it with some degree of willingness. The weather was oppressively hot, too; but Mary found it as tolerable in the shade of the walks as in the house. She sat there for hours, under a large umbrella, watching the slaves, as each slowly filled the canvass-bag hung round his neck, and kept open by a hoop. She followed them with her eyes when they sauntered from the trees to the baskets to empty their pouches, and then back again to the trees; and listened to the rebukes of the overseer when he found unripe fruit among the ripe.

"I am sure," said she to her father one day, "I should come in for many a scolding if I had to pick coffee to-day. If the heat makes us faint as we lie in the shade, what must it be to those who stand in the sun from morning till night! I could not lift a hand, or see the difference between one berry and another."

"Blacks bear the heat better than we do," observed Mr. Bruce. "However, it is really dreadfully sultry to-day. I have seldom felt it so much myself, and I believe the slaves will be as glad as we when night comes."

"The little puffs of air that leave a dead calm," said Mary, "only provoke one to remember the steady breeze we did not know how to value when we had it. I should not care for a thunderstorm if it would but bring coolness."

"Would not you? You little know what thunderstorms are here."

"You forget how many we had in the spring."

"Those were no more like what we shall have soon, than a June night-breeze in England is like a January frost-wind. You may soon know, however, what a Demerara thunderstorm is like."

Mary looked about her as her father pointed, and saw that the face of nature was indeed changed. She had mentioned a thunderstorm because she had heard the overseer predict the approach of one.

There was a mass of clouds towering in a distant quarter of the heavens, not like a pile of snowy peaks, but now rent apart and now tumbled together, and bathed in a dull, red light. The sun, too, looked large and red, while distant objects wore a bluish cast, and looked larger and nearer than usual. There was a dead calm. The pigeon had ceased her cooing: no parrots were showing off their gaudy plumage in the sunlight, and not even the hum of the enamelled beetle was heard.

"What is the moon's age?" asked Mr. Bruce of the overseer.

"She is full to-night, sir, and a stormy night it will be I fear." He held up his finger and listened.

"Hark!" said Mary, "there is the thunder already."

"It is not thunder, my dear."

"It is the sea," said Louisa. "I never heard it here but once before; but I am sure it is the same sound."

"The sea at this distance!" cried Mary.

Her father shook his head, muttering, "God help all who are in harbour, and give them a breeze to carry them out far enough! The shore will be strewed with wrecks by the morning. Come, my dears, let us go home before yonder clouds climb higher."

The whites have not yet become as weather-wise, between the tropics, as the negroes; and both fall short of the foresight which might be attained, and which was actually possessed by the original inhabitants of these countries. A negro cannot, like them, predict a storm twelve days beforehand; but he is generally aware of its approach some hours sooner than his master. It depends upon the terms he happens to be on with the whites, whether or not he gives them the advantage of his observations.

Old Mark sent his daughter Becky to Mr. Bruce's house to deliver his opinion on the subject; but all were prepared. No such friendly warning was given to the Mitchelsons, who,

overcome with the heat, were, from the eldest to the youngest, lying on couches, too languid to lift up their heads or think of what might be passing out of doors. Cassius, meanwhile, was leaning over the gate of his provision-ground watching the moon as she rose, crimson as blood, behind his little plantain grove. Every star looked crimson too, and had its halo like the moon. It was as if a bloody steam had gone up from the earth. Not a breath of air could yet be felt; yet here and there a cedar, taller than the rest, stooped and shivered; and the clouds, now rushing, now poised motionless, indicated a capricious commotion in the upper air. Cassius was watching with much interest these signs of an approaching tempest, when he felt himself pulled by the jacket.

"May I stay with you?" asked poor Hester. "My master and mistress dare not keep at home because our roof is almost off already, and they think the wind will carry it quite away to-night."

"Where are they gone?"

"To find somebody to take them in; but they say there will be no room for me."

"Stay with me then; but nobody will be safe under a roof to-night, I think."

"Where shall we stay then?"

"Here, unless God calls us away. Many may be called before morning."

The little girl stood trembling, afraid of she scarcely knew what, till a tremendous clap of thunder burst near, and then she clung to Cas-

sius, and hid her face. In a few moments the gong was heard, sounding in the hurried irregular manner which betokens an alarm.

"Aha!" cried Cassius. "The white man's house shakes and he is afraid."

"What does he call us for?" said the terrified child. "We can do him no good."

"No; but his house is stronger than ours; and if his shakes, ours may tumble down, and then he would lose his slaves and their houses too. So let us go into the field where we are called, and then we shall see how pale white men can look."

All the way as they went, Hester held one hand before her eyes, for the lightning flashes came thick and fast. Still there was neither wind nor rain; but the roar of the distant sea rose louder in the intervals of the thunder.

Cassius suddenly stopt short, and pulled the little girl's hand from before her face, crying, "Look, look, there is a sight!"

Hester shrieked when she saw a whole field of sugar-canes whirled in the air. Before they had time to fall, the loftiest trees of the forest were carried up in like manner. The mill disappeared, a hundred huts were levelled; there was a stunning roar, a rumbling beneath, a rushing above. The hurricane was upon them in all its fury.

Cassius claiped the child round the waist, and carried rather than led her at his utmost speed beyond the verge of the groves, lest they also should be borne down and crush all beneath them. When he had arrived with his charge in

the field whither the gong had summoned him, slaves were arriving from all parts of the plantation to seek safety in an open place. Their black forms flitting in the mixed light,—now in the glare of the lightning, and now in the rapid gleams which the full moon cast as the clouds were swept away for a moment, might have seemed to a stranger like imps of the storm, collecting to give tidings of its ravages. Like such imps they spoke and acted.

"The mill is down!" cried one.

"No crop next year, for the canes are blown away!" shouted another.

"The hills are bare as a rock,—no coffee, no spice, no cotton! Hurra!"

"But our huts are gone: our plantation-grounds are buried," cried the wailing voice of a woman.

"Hurra! for the white man's are gone too!" answered many mingled tones. Just then a burst of moonlight showed to each the exulting countenances of the rest, and there went up a shout louder than the thunder,—"Hurra hurra! how ugly is the land!"

The sound was hushed, and the warring lights were quenched for a time by the deluge which poured down from the clouds. The slaves crouched together in the middle of the field, supporting one another as well as they could against the fury of the gusts which still blew, and of the tropical rains. An inquiry now went round,—where was Horner? It was his duty to be in the field as soon as the gong had sounded,

but no one had seen him. There was a stern hope in every heart that his roof had fallen in and buried him and his whip together. It was not so, however.

After a while, the roaring of water was heard very near, and some of the blacks separated from the rest to see in what direction the irregular torrents which usually attend a hurricane were taking their course. There was a strip of low ground between the sloping field where the negroes were collected and the opposite hill, and through the middle of this ground a river rushed along where a river had never been seen before. A tree was still standing here and there in the midst of the foaming waters, and what had, a few minutes ago, been a hillock with a few shrubs growing out of it, was now an island. The negroes thought they heard a shout from this island, and then supposed it must be fancy; but when the cloudy rack was swept away and allowed the moon to look down for a moment, they saw that some one was certainly there, clinging to the shrubs, and in imminent peril of being carried away if the stream should continue to rise. It was Horner, who was making his way to the field when the waters overtook him in the low ground, and drove him to the hillock to seek a safety which was likely to be short enough. The waters rose every moment: and though the distance was not above thirty feet from the hillock to the sloping bank on which the negroes had now ranged themselves to watch his fate, the waves dashed through in so furious a current

that he did not dare to commit himself to them. He called, he shouted, he screamed for help, his agony growing more intense, as inch after inch, foot after foot, of his little shore disappeared. The negroes answered his shouts very punctually; but whether the impatience of peril prompted the thought, or an evil conscience, or whether it were really so, the shouts seemed to him to have more of triumph than sympathy in them; and cruel as would have been his situation had all the world been looking on with a desire to help, it was dreadfully aggravated by the belief that the wretches whom he had so utterly despised were watching his struggles, and standing with folded arms to see how he would help himself when there was none to help him. He turned and looked to the other shore; but it was far too distant to be reached. If he was to be saved, it must be by crossing the narrower gulley; and, at last, a means of doing so seemed to offer. Several trees had been carried past by the current; but they were all borne on headlong, and he had no means of arresting their course: but one came at length, a trunk of the largest growth, and therefore making its way more slowly than the rest. It tilted from time to time against the bank, and when it reached the island, fairly stuck at the very point where the stream was narrowest. With intense gratitude,—gratitude which two hours before he would have denied could ever be felt towards slaves,—Horner saw the negroes cluster about the root of the tree to hold it firm in its position. Its branchy head seemed to him

to be secure, and the only question now was, whether he could keep his hold on this bridge, while the torrent rose over it, as if in fury at having its course delayed. He could but try, for it was his only chance. The beginning of his adventure would be the most perilous, on account of the boughs over and through which he must make his way. Slowly, fearfully, but firmly he accomplished this, and the next glimpse of moonlight showed him astride on the bare trunk, clinging with knees and arms, and creeping forward as he battled with the spray. The slaves were no less intent. Not a word was spoken, not one let go, and even the women would have a hold. A black cloud hid the moon just when Horner seemed within reach of the bank; and what happened in that dark moment,—whether it was the force of the stream, or the strength of the temptation,—no lips were ever known to utter; but the event was that the massy trunk heaved once over, the unhappy wretch lost his grasp, and was carried down at the instant he thought himself secure. Horrid yells once more arose, from the perishing man, and from the blacks now dispersed along the bank to see the last of him.

"He is not gone yet," was the cry of one; "he climbed yon tree as if he had been a water rat."

"There let him sit if the wind will let him," cried another. "That he should have been carried straight to a tree after all!"

"Stand fast! here comes the gale again!" shouted a third.

The gale came. The tree in which Horner had found refuge bowed, cracked,—but before it fell, the wretch was blown from it like a flake of foam, and swallowed up finally in the surge beneath. This was clearly seen by a passing gleam.

"Hurra! hurra!" was the cry once more. "God sent the wind. It was God that murdered him, not we."

When the planters were sufficiently recovered to exchange letters of condolence, Mr. Mitchelson wrote thus to Mr. Bruce. "You have probably heard that my overseer, poor Horner, was lost from the waters being out when he was making his way to the field where his duty called him. We all lament him much; but your son will be glad to hear (pray tell him when you write) that my slaves are conducting themselves as well as if still under the charge of him we have lost. I am persuaded they would have risked their own lives to save his, if it had been possible. But, as they say, it was God's will that he should perish!"

Chapter X.

PROTECTION IS OPPRESSION IN DEMERARA.

The external devastation which attends a hurricane is by no means the only evil it brings. Where there is any difficulty in the management

of affairs, public or private, it is sure to be increased or made insurmountable by any general excuse for aggression or rebellion. Many an insurrection has taken place during or immediately after a hurricane. Many a half-ruined planter has found his embarrassments brought to a crisis by the crowd of demands which are hastened instead of deferred by disaster. This was now Mr. Bruce's case.

As soon as this gentleman had seen the destruction of all the hopes he had built on his coffee-crop, he began to fear a seizure of his slaves by his creditors. He assembled them within an inclosure as fast as possible, and erected his fences, and had them guarded with the utmost care, that he might at all events exempt his human property from a legal seizure. But his precautions were vain. Some gap was found, or pretended to be found, through which the officers entered in the night, and levied slaves for the benefit of his creditors. This was sad news for the breakfast-table; and as Mr. Bruce was really a kind-hearted man, it added to his concern that, in the confusion of the seizure and in the darkness of midnight, the slaves had been carried off without the usual care being taken not to separate families: for some regard is paid to this consideration in the absence of temptation to overlook it. Old Mark's household, among others, had been divided. Becky was this morning sitting in grief beside her aged father, while Willy and Nell (whose lover had been left behind) were marching, in sullen despair, with drivers at

their backs, they knew not whither, to become the property of they knew not whom.

It would have been hard to say among what class of persons the deepest distress prevailed in consequence of this hurricane, which the revengeful impulses of the blacks had made them for a moment hail as a friend. The slaves who were levied for their master's debts mourned as if they were carried anew into a strange land: their friends at home wept for them more bitterly than if they had been dead; for they were gone to renew their mortal sorrows instead of finding peace and freedom in the better land beyond the grave. Cassius's heart was burning within him because the prospect of freedom, of late so hopeful though not very near, was now removed for ever, or to so great a distance as to leave him in despair. He was to be sold; and it would be long before the value of slaves, now considerably raised by the event which had happened, would be so lowered as to admit of a hope of obtaining ransom. Cassius's earnings being found to be greater than was expected, his price was considerably raised, and he was placed first in the lot of marketable slaves on Mitchelson's estate.

The master, meanwhile, was lamenting the loss of his factotum, Horner, and indolently dreading the difficulties of making new arrangements, and doing some things himself which he had been accustomed to leave to his overseer. But his distress was nothing compared with his friend, Mr. Bruce's. In perpetual fear of arrest, he dared not go out of doors to see what had

happened and what must be done. He delayed from day to day looking into his affairs, suspecting that he should find total ruin at the bottom. He resisted, partly through shame, and partly through tenderness for Alfred, every entreaty to send for his son and to bring his affairs to a certain issue. He wrote, "do not think of coming" in every letter; but it chanced one day that Mary found an opportunity of putting in a postscript to this effect: "Notwithstanding what my father says about your remaining where you are, I think, and so does my mother, that it would do him a world of good to see you. He grows more anxious every day, and there is nobody here who can help to comfort him as you could." Upon this hint Alfred appeared. He little thought how the other suffering parties we have mentioned had cast a longing look towards him, as the friend most likely to aid them, or to sorrow with them if he could not assist.

"Our young master would have Willy and Nell brought back if he was here," observed Becky to her father.

"Mr. Alfred would not let my ransom be raised, or may be he would buy me himself, now he has an estate," sighed Cassius.

"I would persuade Alfred to train my new overseer, and advise me what to do, if I could get at him," observed Mitchelson. "He did wonders at that mill-dam, and I am sure he would do no less now."

So when Alfred appeared, a gleam of pleasure passed over many a heavy countenance.

"My dear son!" exclaimed Mr. Bruce. "We are always glad to see you. Who is not? But you have come at the very best moment. There is to be a meeting of planters to-morrow. You cannot think how I dread appearing; and now you will go instead of me. It is necessary that this estate should be represented; and you may truly say that I am too ill to appear in person."

Alfred was ready to be useful in any way; but urged the necessity of his being fully informed respecting his father's affairs before he could act as his proxy. He begged that this day might be devoted to an inspection of the accounts. Mr. Bruce groaned; but on this point his son was firm. The two gentlemen and the agent whom Mr. Bruce's indolence had induced him to employ, were closeted for the rest of the day with their books and papers.

Mrs. Bruce lay sighing and weeping the whole day, offering a passive resistance to all the comfort her daughter endeavoured to bestow. In the evening, Mary left her for a few minutes, to seek the refreshment of the cool air of the garden. She remained within sight of the room where the inquiry was going forward on which so much depended; looking up to the windows every moment as if she could learn anything by that means of the probable fate of the family. At last she saw somebody moving within: it was Alfred who came to the window, saw her, made a sign to her to remain where she was, and presently was drawing her arm within his own,

and leading her where they could not be overheard.

Alfred explained that his father was indeed deep in debt, but that his incumbrances might be cleared off by good management, as they had only been brought on by indolence and waste. If his father would dismiss his agent, and conduct his affairs himself; if he would introduce a better division of labour, and a greater economy of the resources of the estate, all might be redeemed within a few years.

"Can I do nothing to assist?" Mary anxiously inquired. "I know I can introduce economy into our household arrangements, for my mother leaves them more and more to me: but can I help my father as well?"

"You may, by taking an interest in what ought to be his business. Go with him sometimes when he superintends in the field, and show him that you understand accounts, and keep an eye upon the books. You know as much of accounts as I do, and let him see that he may trust you."

"I may thank Mrs. H—— for teaching me this part of a woman's business," said Mary. "She managed the fortunes of her five children from the day of her husband's death till their majority, and I am thankful that she taught me what may now be so useful. I may learn the values of coffee in time; and in the meanwhile I will make use of what I know of that of pounds, shillings, and pence."

"It is no mean knowledge, sister, since, in your case, the happiness of some hundreds of

human beings is affected by it. The fate of our slaves depends on the state of my father's affairs. I commend their comfort to you. Soften their hardships as much as your influence allows, and then my father will soon find that their happiness and his prosperity go together."

"O, Alfred! have I any power,—any responsibility of this kind? It makes me tremble to think of it."

"If ladies have been frequently cited to answer the complaints of slaves, (which you know to be the case,) it is clear that they have influence over the fate of these unhappy dependants. If the wife of a planter has been imprisoned for torturing a slave, why should not the daughter of a planter use her influence to save her father's slaves from punishment, or, better still, keep them from deserving it?"

"I have been with old Mark to-day," said Mary, "and I have been trying all means I could think of to get Becky to complain to my father, instead of the Protector, about Sunday labour: but she is so fierce, I can make nothing of her. She never said a word about it while she had her brother with her, but she declares she must make her complaints for herself now he is gone. I dread the exposure, and she might get redress from my father, I am sure."

Alfred had heard with grief that Willy and Nell were among the levied slaves. What his sister now said determined him to seek out old Mark and his daughter without delay; and the brother and sister were soon at the door of the hut.

Mark was sitting in the only chair the hut contained, talking as if to people round him, though he was alone. Alfred immediately saw that the little light of intellect which old age had left was quenched. The cause of this was evident from his taking every man who came near him for Willy, and every woman for Nell.

"How much did you sell the pig for?" he asked Alfred. "He brought a good price, for your clothes are as fine as a white's.—But," suddenly recollecting himself, "how did you get back? O, you will be flogged for a runaway."

"This is Mr. Alfred. You remember your young master, Mr. Alfred?"

"Ah! Mr. Alfred is come to your wedding, Nell. Why, my wife did not look as pretty as you on her wedding-day. And who married you, and why did not you let me go to your wedding? Becky said you could not be married because they had carried you away, but now you are back again, I will sing you a song I made for you and Harry."

Presently the old man broke off singing in a great passion.

"Willy, you are a dog to bring me no water when I am so thirsty;" and he shook a stick at his young master.

Alfred humoured him and took down a calabash, and was filling it with water when Becky came home.

"See, Becky, what it is to be married!" cried the old man. "When will you be as fine as Nelly?"

Becky made no answer, but snatched the calabash from Alfred's hand, and served her father herself.

"You would not believe that I could save you from Sunday labour, Becky," said Mary. "Here is my brother: you had better make your complaint to him."

Becky was so far from being reserved, as she had been in the morning, about this complaint, that she poured out her grievances as fast as she could speak, and far faster than Alfred could understand her. The fact was, she had applied to the Protector of slaves, and he had dismissed her complaint as frivolous and vexatious, because she owned that she had frequently gone through an equal portion of Sunday labour without complaint. She was now furious against all parties, and would scarcely hold her tongue long enough to hear Alfred say that he thought her's a hard case, and only blamed her for not having complained long before.

It appeared that the overseer was in the habit of appointing a heavier task on Saturdays than other days, and of compelling the completion of it on the Sunday. It was evident that, if he chose to appoint a double task on the Saturday, the negroes might be deprived altogether of the benefit of the Sunday: and the young people thought that one such attempt to evade the law on the part of the overseer was enough to warrant his immediate dismissal, if it could be proved against him; and that the Protector of slaves could be little fit for his office, if he made the

frequent repetition of a grievance the reason for not redressing it. Becky smiled incredulously when Alfred promised that he would come, next Sunday morning, and see whether she was at work or at leisure; and if the former, on what pretence.

He had some hope of being able by that time to make some arrangement for the return of the brother and sister, as he was to meet their present owner at the assembly of planters on the Wednesday; but the event disappointed him. Everything went wrong at the meeting. He dissented entirely from the prayer of the petition to government which had been agreed on; he disapproved of the tone of indignant complaint assumed by the planters, and failed in his endeavour to convince some of them that the remedy for their grievances rested with themselves. He had laid his accounts for being treated as a visionary, and for his own plans being laughed at as absurd; but he was not prepared for being put down because his father's affairs were known to be in a bad state; or for the insulting mirth with which all humane suggestions were received, even while the name of Providence was on every tongue. But nothing disgusted him so much as the apathy with which his father's principal creditor turned from the offer of a negociation about the restoration of Willy and Nell. There seemed no hope of effecting their return; and the only prospect he could hold out to Becky was that of joining them whenever the death of her father should release her from her attendance upon

him; and this could be done only by sacrificing her lover, as her sister had been compelled to do by force.

Chapter XI.

BEASTS HUNT MEN IN DEMERARA.

The absent brother and sister were less willing to relinquish the hope of return. Upon this hope they had lived from the moment of their departure: they saw it in each other's eyes, while their captivity was too new to allow them an opportunity of speaking of it; and they kept it alive by sympathy when some relaxation of discipline allowed them to exchange a whisper from time to time. They planned to escape in the night, to take refuge in the woods, and subsist there as well as they could till the search should be over, and they could find their way back to Mr. Bruce's estate, and throw themselves at their master's feet to petition for such an exchange of slaves as would allow them to remain in their old habitation. They had no thought of evading slavery altogether. They had no means of leaving the coast, or of obtaining their freedom within it. The utmost they hoped was to spend a life of slavery under a lenient master, and among those they had long known, and could love: a wish

not so very immoderate or presumptuous, it may be thought, as to merit very severe chastisement. Yet they knew that no punishment would be thought too heavy, if they should be detected in cherishing this hope.

One afternoon, they and their black brethren on the estate were left unguarded, owing to the sudden illness of the driver, who fell down in the field and was carried home in fits. A glance instantly passed from Willy to Nell, and joy was in their hearts that an opportunity of escape should occur so much sooner than they had expected. There was no roll-call that night. If there had been, the brother and sister would have been called in vain, for they were already on their perilous way to the woods. Nobody missed them: they met nobody as they proceeded in the shade till sunset, and over the plain in the twilight, till they reached the forest. They did not know their way any further than they had been able to study it by observing the stars. They were to travel northward when the time should come for them to proceed to Mr. Bruce's; but their immediate object was to escape pursuit: and as pursuit would most probably be directed where it would be guessed they wished to go, they turned due west for the present, as soon as they could make out the points of the compass by the lights overhead. They pushed on at their utmost speed, disregarding cold, hunger, and the difficulties of the way. They hastily plucked wild fruit when it hung within reach, now creeping through thick underwood, now

helping one another over fragments of rock, and never stopped till day began to dawn. Then Nell cast herself down on the ground, and besought her brother to let her rest. He now observed for the first time that one of her feet was covered with blood, and frightfully swollen. A large thorn had pierced it some hours before, and as she had in her hurry let it remain, it was buried too deep to be easily got out, and she was so lame as to be unable to go farther.

Willy looked round anxiously, and walked from side to side to gaze abroad and see whether this spot was easily accessible from any quarter. He came back presently with a more cheerful countenance, saying,

"The bushes are thick all round us, and the wood is very wild; and there is fruit on the trees, and a little river near, where we may drink. If we could but hide ourselves as long as the sun is up, we might be safe for many days."

"Cannot we pile up these big stones to make a hiding-place, Willy? Set them one upon another against this bank, and leave a hole behind where we may creep in."

Willy found this not very difficult. The hiding place looked outside like a natural heap of fragments of rock, while behind there was a hole large enough for two people to sit upright; and when some dry grass was shaken down to make the ground soft, the runaway slaves thought they could be content to remain in this narrow dwelling for a long time. Willy laughed as he had

not laughed since childhood, when he leaned back in his dark corner, and Nell smiled as much as the pain of her foot would let her. Hope had already done her heart good. Twenty-four hours sooner she would have made everybody near her melancholy with her groans, for slaves are fond of pity, and are made selfish by their wrongs; but now, Nell began to feel like a free-woman. She could procure no indulgence by complaint, and she was grateful to her brother for his assistance in making her escape. She therefore hoped that he would sleep, and remained quite quiet that she might not hinder his doing so. Perhaps she would have attempted to sing a drowsy song, if she had not been afraid of betraying their retreat by permitting any sound to issue from it.

Her fit of patience lasted longer than might have been expected from such a novice in the virtue. For a few hours she sat bearing the pain very well, and she might possibly have endured for another if she had not heard, or fancied she heard, a sound which made her heart throb as painfully as her foot. The woods reposed in all the stillness of noon, or she would have supposed the sound to be some freak of the wind among the high foliage of the forest; but there was no wind, there was nothing to provoke an echo; and her ears were struck by something too like the distant, the very distant baying of a hound. She laid her hand on her brother's arm. He did not stir. She paused to listen again before she disturbed him. She had

not long to wait. It came again, nearer, and too distinct to be mistaken. She shook the sleeper.

"Willy, Willy! hark to the hounds! The hounds are after us!"

Willy groaned as he started up, and shook some of the stones overhead, which rolled down with a great clatter.

"Never mind that, Nell. We could not keep under cover with the hounds upon us. O, if we had but passed a stream in our way! If we could but have baulked the hounds!"

"There is a river below," cried Nell; and Willy was off at the word.

"O, Willy, Willy, do not leave me! I cannot walk. O, carry me with you!"

Willy hesitated a moment as his worse and better nature strove together. He came back for his sister, took her on his back, and began to scramble down to the stream. It was too late, however. The shouts of men were now heard mingling with the loud and louder baying of the blood-hounds, which might be expected the next moment to spring from the bushes upon their victims. There was no hope of getting down to the stream in time, much less of being hidden on the opposite side. Willy cast a hurried look behind him every moment; and when at last he heard a rustling in the underwood, and saw fierce eyes glaring upon him, he laid his burden on the grass, crying,

"Nell, will you die or be a slave?"

Nell grovelled on the earth and made no answer.

"I will die!" shouted Willy, and was about to spring into the water. His sister recalled him by her cry.

"Becky; poor Becky! She will be all alone when our father dies."

Willy turned. What his choice would have been cannot be known, for there was no time for choice. Before the slave-hunters could come up to see what happened, a fierce blood-hound had sprung at Willy's throat and brought him down. Once having tasted blood, the animal was not to be restrained by whistle, shouts or blows, till the long death-grapple was over. When the mangled negro had ceased to struggle, and lay extended in his blood, the hound slunk back into the bushes, licking his chops, and growling at Nell as if he would make another spring if he dared.

The remaining fugitive had no power to resist, even if she had had the will. But her will was annihilated. She had nothing to hope or to fear in the present extremity of bodily and mental misery. She sat quietly on the grass when they tied her hands behind her back. She attempted to walk when she was bid, and submitted to be carried when it was found she could not stand. She did not speak when they took up the body of her brother from its bloody bed, nor start when they tossed it into the stream, though splashed by the plunge.

She was conscious but of one passing impulse

during her journey back,—to throttle the man on whose shoulders she was carried, as the hound had throttled her brother: but the effort only served to remind her that her arms were fastened. She was asleep or in a stupor when brought back to her hut, a circumstance which was pointed out by a white as conclusive of the fact that negroes have no feeling. As she was too lame to work, however, and not in the best condition for the lash, she was not roused. There was some mercy in leaving her to find out for herself, when she should again be able to collect her disordered thoughts, that the brand and the stocks were waiting for her, and that the days of her bondage must henceforth be spent alone.

Chapter XII.

NO MASTER KNOWS HIS MAN IN DEMERARA.

Though Alfred was mortified at the event of his meeting with the planters, he had reason to be satisfied on the whole with the result of his present visit to Demerara. Now that poor Horner's opposition was at an end, it became comparatively easy to carry two or three measures about Mitchelson's slaves that Alfred had much at heart.

"I cannot give up the point of Cassius's freedom," said he to Mitchelson. "I feel myself pledged in honour to obtain it."

"In honour! I will spare your honour, my young friend, and never think the worse of you if you forgot Cassius from this day."

"You!" exclaimed Alfred in astonishment. "I am not pledged to you but to Cassius."

"And what should Cassius know about honour?" asked Mitchelson, laughing.

"Call it humanity, if you please. Cassius knows what humanity is; or, at any rate, what liberty is: and since my employing him at the mill-dam was the means at once of exciting his hopes and raising his ransom, I cannot lose sight of him till I lose sight of the vessel in which he shall be sailing to Africa."

"You must keep a sharp look out then; for he may be marched off south, or west, or east any day. I can make nothing of him, and shall not keep him."

"South, or west, or east! I thought you said he was promised to a planter in the neighbourhood?"

"He was; but the bargain is off. The fellow was so idle and mulish the day that I wanted him to show to the best advantage, that my friend will not have him, unless for a lower price than I mean to accept."

"You had better take his ransom as it was first fixed, and let him go. You will make nothing of him at home or in the market after what he has gone through lately."

"I am quite of your opinion, and would end the business at once, but that a neighbour has

been talking to me about it, and convincing me that it would be wrong."

"Wrong! how should it be wrong?"

"We planters determined long ago never to admit the right of slaves to purchase their freedom. We mean to keep it optional on our part whether to sell them or not, in the same manner as we deny the right of any one to make us sell any other articles of our property. Now, so much has been said about this particular slave, Cassius, that my neighbours are afraid that, if I let him go, advantage will be taken of the case to represent that we can be obliged to part with our slaves, like the Spanish planters. So you see that, in justice to the West India interest, I must refuse Cassius his freedom."

"I remember," replied Alfred, "that some reforms specified by an Order in Council were objected to on the ground you have stated; and the declaration is of a piece with all the declarations with which government is insulted by the landholders here. But though your neighbours disregard equally the law of nature, the law of God, and the ordinances of the government under which they live, they admit, I believe, the conventional law of honour, of which you think Cassius can know nothing; they admit that a gentleman must keep a promise, deliberately made, and often repeated."

"A promise to a gentleman, certainly. Promises to slaves are nothing, you know, if circumstances alter, as they have done in this case. The usages of society, for whose sake alone

promises are made binding, bear no relation to slaves."

"True enough," said Alfred, smiling. "I take you at your word, Mr. Mitchelson. You have deliberately and repeatedly promised *me* that Cassius should ransom himself at a certain sum. That sum is now ready, and if you refuse to take it and let the man go, I will expose your breach of promise to every planter in Demerara."

"My dear Alfred! How strange of you to treat an old friend so ceremoniously!"

"If you will not grant my claim in a friendly way, I must urge it ceremoniously. Tell me in so many words, do you mean to keep your promise or break it?"

"I declare I am quite at a loss what to do. My neighbours fully understand that the ransom is refused."

"That shall be no difficulty. I will tell them that I have recalled to your memory a positive promise to myself. I will take care of your honour towards them, if you will take care of it towards myself. And now let us go and finish this business."

"I am sure, my dear young friend, it always gives me the greatest pleasure to oblige you, and besides———"

Alfred stopped short as he was walking, and said, "We must understand one another better before we have done. I cannot allow you to think that you are doing an act of favour. It is an act of very tardy justice to Cassius, and of ungracious necessity towards myself. I am very

sorry to speak thus to an old friend, Mr. Mitchelson; and no interests of my own should make me thus fight my ground inch by inch; but for the sake of the slaves I must deny that it is any matter of favour to let a slave go free when he offers his stipulated ransom."

Mitchelson muttered something about his being unable to cut fine like his accomplished young friend.

"You cut fine just now," replied Alfred, "on behalf of the planters; you must allow me to do the same on behalf of the slaves."

They presently reached the spot where Cassius was seemingly at work with others who were repairing the devastation caused by the hurricane. Alfred asked Cassius whether he still had money to buy his ransom as at first fixed. He had. How soon could he bring it in his hand and buy his freedom? "Presently; in an hour; in five minutes," the slave said, as he saw the benevolent smile broadening on Alfred's face.

"Fetch it then, and you and I will not part till you sail away over the blue sea yonder. Mr. Mitchelson, we will join you again presently, and conclude the business."

"You are not going with him, Alfred? He will return sooner without you."

But Alfred determined to lose sight of his charge no more till they should have quitted Paradise.

Cassius walked so rapidly that Alfred could scarcely keep up with him. On reaching his hut, a part of which had fallen in during the

hurricane, he put his spade into Alfred's hands, pointing to a place where a heap of rubbish lay. He fetched another spade for himself from a neighbour's hut, and began to dig among the rubbish with might and main. Alfred worked as hard as he, and neither had yet spoken a word. They first uncovered the bed of planks and mat on which the slave had spent so many nights of desolate grief, and which had been so often watered with his tears. Cassius, by a sudden impulse, kicked these to as great a distance as he could, snatched up a burning stick from his fire, and kindled them. As the flame shot up, he danced and sang till the last chip and shred were burned. He then spat upon the ashes and returned to his work.

A little way under ground, beneath where the bed had stood, a leathern pouch appeared. Cassius seized it, showed Alfred with a rapid and significant gesture that it was full of coin, and marched straight towards the entrance of his garden.

"Stay a moment," said Alfred, laying his hand on his shoulder; "you are not aware that you will never come back to this place again. Is there nothing here, nothing of your own, that you wish to take with you? No clothes, no tools, or utensils?"

Cassius looked about him with an expression of intense disgust.

"Be prudent, Cassius. Your clothes and your tools will not be the less useful to you in Liberia because they belonged to you as a slave."

Cassius slowly returned and took up a few articles, but presently seemed much disposed to throw them into the fire.

"Well, well," said Alfred, "leave them where they are, and if your master does not allow you the value of them, I will. Now take one more look at the dwelling where you have lived so long, and then let us be gone."

Cassius had, however, no sentimental regrets to bestow on the abode of his captivity. He refused the last look, and strode away as an escaped malefactor from the gibbet, without any wish to look back. The first words he spoke were uttered as he passed old Robert's hut.

"Little Hester will cry when she comes home and finds that I am gone. Can you do nothing for poor little Hester, Mr. Alfred?"

This was exactly what Alfred was turning over in his mind.

When Cassius had told down his ransom with Alfred's assistance, when the necessary forms of business were gone through, and the variety of coins which the pouch contained were fairly transferred to Mitchelson, Alfred said,

"Now that our affair of justice is concluded, I am going to bring forward a matter of pure favour." Mr. Mitchelson, who liked granting favours better than doing justice, looked very gracious. Alfred explained, that by Cassius's departure, Hester would lose her only friend. He begged that she might be taken from under the charge of Robert and Sukey, and placed with some one who would treat her kindly, and that

Mr. Mitchelson would himself inquire after the friendless little girl from time to time

"With the utmost pleasure, Alfred. I shall always pay particular attention, I am sure, to objects that interest you. But would you like to purchase her? I am sorry that I cannot offer, in the present state of my affairs, to give her to you; but the demand shall be moderate if you are disposed to purchase her."

Alfred was also sorry that the state of his own and his father's affairs was not such as could justify his purchasing slaves. He would fain have made this child free; but as he could not, he consoled himself with the hope that he had secured better treatment for her till he might be able to render her a higher benefit still. Mr. Mitchelson passed his word of honour that she should that day be removed to the dwelling of a gentle-tempered woman, who had lately lost a daughter of about Hester's age.

"Have you nothing to say to me, Cassius?" asked Mr. Mitchelson, as Cassius was turning his back for ever upon his master's mansion. "Have you no farewell for me, so long as we have lived together?"

No, not any. Cassius cared little for good manners just at this moment, and was only in haste to be gone.

"Lived together!" said Alfred to himself, as he quitted Paradise. "These slaveholders never dream that they may not use the language of the employers of a free and reasonable service. An English gentleman may speak to his household

servants of the time they have 'lived together;' but it is too absurd from the slaveholder who despises his slave to the degraded being who hates his owner."

Mitchelson meanwhile was wondering as much at Alfred, thinking, as he watched them from the steps of his mansion,—

"That young man is a perfect Quixote, or he could never see anything to care about in such a sullen brute as Cassius. I am glad I was never persuaded to send any of my children to England. No man is fit to be a West Indian planter who has had what is called a good education in England."

As Alfred was crossing his father's estate on his way home, he met the overseer looking angry, and with his anger was mingled some grief. He was very ready to tell what was the matter. He had just heard of the "unfortunate accident," by which Willy had been torn to pieces by bloodhounds. When Alfred had made two strange discoveries, he saw that nothing was to be made of the overseer, and rode on. One discovery was, that the man's anger was against Willy himself for the attempt at escape; the other, that he had just blurted out the whole story to Mark in Becky's absence. Of course Alfred lost no time in seeing if he could comfort the old man.

Mark was still alone when they went in, rocking himself in his chair, and apparently aware of what had happened, for he was singing, in a faint wailing voice, a funeral song in his own tongue.

He stopped when Alfred entered the hut, Cassius remaining outside, and before he could be prevented, rose from his seat, saying,

"I am ready for the burial. I see them waiting for me outside. Don't stop me; I am ready for the burial."

In attempting to move forwards, he fell heavily.

"Help, help!" cried Alfred to his companion. "Lay him on the mat: sprinkle water on his face; chafe his hands!"

It was too late. He was gone. He was indeed "ready for the burial." Alfred waited for Becky that he might give her the only comfort in his power, in the hope that, now her filial cares were ended, she might join her sister by the exchange of the one or the other.

"Cassius has been climbing every hour since sunrise, to where he may see the sea," said Mr. Bruce, laughing, to Alfred, on the day preceding his return to Barbadoes. "He is like a school boy going home for the holidays."

"To compare great things with small," added Alfred.

"So you ship him with a party of your own, and your neighbour's liberated slaves, for Liberia. How did you get leave? How did you gain any interest with the American Colonization Society?"

"Our object being the same, father, there was no difficulty in coming to an understanding. We planters take upon ourselves the expense of transportation, and the society receives our free blacks under the protection of its agent at Liberia."

"And what do you suppose will become of them there?"

"That which has become of the free blacks of the United States who are settled there. They will labour, and prosper and be happy. They will become farmers, planters, merchants, or tradespeople. They will make their own laws, guard their own rights, and be as we are, men and citizens."

"Do you expect me to believe all this, son? Do you think I know so little what blacks are?"

"Neither you nor I, father, can learn, in this place, what Africans are in a better place. I believe, and I certainly expect others to believe, what I have told you, on the strength of sound testimony. I wish you could once witness a shipment for Liberia. It would confirm the testimony wonderfully."

"I am aware, son, that there are powerful emotions in the mind of a negro at the very mention of Africa, or of the sea, or even of a ship. When the importation of slaves was more practised than it is now, the most endearing name by which negroes called each other was 'shipmate.' If it was so endearing on their being brought to a foreign country, I can fancy that it must be yet more so, when they return to their own. The little feeling that blacks have is all spent upon their country."

Alfred shook his head, observing that he believed nobody in Demerara was qualified to pronounce on that point.

"What! not I, that have had to do with negroes all my life?"

"Do you remember the Canary bird that Mary showed you when you were in England?" was Alfred's reply.

"What the little pining thing that was kept n the housekeeper's room at the Grosvenor Square house? O yes! Mary was very fond of it, I remember."

"Mary gave that Canary its seed and water for years, and she would have laughed if any one had told her that she knew nothing about Canary birds; but it would have been very true; for that tame little creature, drawing up its tiny bucket of water when it was bid, seeing the sunbeams shut out as soon as ever it hailed them with a burst of song, was not like one of the same species with the wild, winged creatures that flit about its native islands, and warble unchecked till twilight settles down upon the woods. And we, father, can never guess from looking at a negro sulking in the stocks, or tilling lands which yield him no harvest, what he may be where there is no white man to fear and hate, and where he may reap whatever he has sown. Happily there are some who have been to Liberia, and can tell us what a negro may become."

SUMMARY.

This volume, like the last, enlarges on principles already laid down. It treats of the respective values of different kinds of labour, and of a particular mode of investing capital. The truths illustrated may be arranged as follows.

Property is held by conventional, not natural right.

As the agreement to hold man in property never took place between the parties concerned, *i. e.*, is not conventional, Man has no right to hold Man in property.

Law, *i. e.*, the sanctioned agreement of the parties concerned, secures property.

Where the parties are not agreed, therefore, law does not secure property.

Where one of the parties under the law is held as property by another party, the law injures the one or the other as often as they are opposed. Moreover, its very protection injures the protected party,—as when a rebellious slave is hanged.

Human labour is more valuable than brute labour, only because actuated by reason; for human strength is inferior to brute strength.

The origin of labour, human and brute, is the Will.

The Reason of slaves is not subjected to exercise, nor their will to more than a few weak motives.

The labour of slaves is therefore less valuable than that of brutes, inasmuch as their strength is inferior; and less valuable than that of free labourers, inasmuch as their Reason and Will are feeble and alienated.

Free and slave labour are equally owned by the capitalist.

Where the labourer is not held as capital, the capitalist pays for labour only.

Where the labourer is held as capital, the capitalist not only pays a much higher price for an equal quantity of labour, but also for waste, negligence, and theft, on the part of the labourer.

Capital is thus sunk, which ought to be reproduced.

As the supply of slave-labour does not rise and fall with the wants of the capitalist, like that of free labour, he employs his occasional surplus on works which could be better done by brute labour or machinery.

By rejecting brute labour, he refuses facilities for convertible husbandry, and for improving the labour of his slaves by giving them animal food.

By rejecting machinery, he declines the most direct and complete method of saving labour.

Thus, again, capital is sunk which ought to be reproduced.

In order to make up for this loss of capital to slave owners, bounties and prohibitions are granted in their behalf by government; the waste committed by certain capitalists abroad, being thus paid for out of the earnings of those at home.

Sugar being the production especially protected, everything is sacrificed by planters to the growth of sugar. The land is exhausted by perpetual cropping, the least possible portion of it is tilled for food, the slaves are worn out by overwork, and their numbers decrease in proportion to the scantiness of their food, and the oppressiveness of their toil.

When the soil is so far exhausted as to place its owner out of reach of the sugar-bounties, more food is raised, less toil is inflicted, and the slave population increases.

Legislative protection, therefore, not only taxes the people at home, but promotes ruin, misery, and death, in the protected colonies.

A free trade in sugar would banish slavery altogether, since competition must induce an economy of labour and capital; *i. e.*, a substitution of free for slave labour.

Let us see, then, what is the responsibility of the legislature in this matter.

The slave system inflicts an incalculable amount of human suffering, for the sake of making a wholesale waste of labour and capital.

Since the slave system is only supported by legislative protection, the legislature is responsible for the misery caused by direct infliction, and for the injury indirectly occasioned by the waste of labour and capital.

Printed by W. Clowes, Stamford-Street.

ELLA OF GARVELOCH.

Chapter I.

LANDLORD AND TENANT.

Among the islands which are clustered around the western shore of Argyleshire, there is a small chain called the Garveloch Isles, or the Isles of Rough Rock. There are four of them, divided from the coast of Lorn by a tossing sea, and by scattered islands larger than themselves; and from each other by narrow sounds, studded with rocks, and difficult to navigate, on account of the force of their currents. This difficulty would have placed the inhabitants nearly out of reach of intercourse with those of the mainland, even if that intercourse had been desired by either party; but it was not, at the date of our narrative, for they knew and cared little about each other. The islanders, consisting of only a few families scattered over Garveloch, (the principal of the group, which therefore gives it name to the whole,) thought of nothing but providing as they could for themselves alone; and their place

of habitation was so wild and dreary that it presented no attractions to visitors. Garveloch was the only inhabited island of the four; Ilachanu, the westermost and next largest, being a desert of rocks and moorland; and the easternmost, considerably smaller, not having even received the poor distinction of a name.

The length of Garveloch is about a mile and a half; but its dwellers were, in the days of our tale, as little acquainted with each other's concerns as if a chain of mountains had divided the north-eastern from the south-western parts of their island. The difficulties which lay in the way of their intercourse were so great from the nature of the land,—it being divided by steep rocks into cliffs and narrow valleys which were almost impassable,—that the rare communication which did take place was by coasting when the weather was calm enough to render the Sound safe for the crazy boats and small skill of the islanders. These boats were but two; one belonging to a farmer who cultivated his sandy fields on the southernmost and sunniest part of the land, and the other to the family of a fisherman who had tenanted a good cottage and croft on the shore some way higher up. These boats were borrowed as they were wanted; and the intercourse of lending and receiving back again was all that ever took place, except on the rare occasions of a marriage, a birth, or a funeral, or the still rarer one of a visit from the proprietor. These visits averaged about one in the lifetime of each laird; for if it chanced that any one of the race

was so fond of the wildest kind of scenery, or so addicted to any pursuit in which the productions of these islands could assist him, as to show his face a second time to his amazed tenantry, it as often happened that another was kept away entirely by the reports of those who had no love of dreary lands and perilous waters.

There are traces in all the islands of times when they had been more frequented; of times when the first introduction of a new faith into this remote region was followed up by rites which must have given to it an aspect of civilization which it had now long lost. Tombs of gray stone, with a cross at the head of each, are conspicuous here and there; and in the most secluded parts are mouldering walls which seem to have formed hermitages in the olden times. If these establishments were, as is most probable, connected with the cathedral of Iona, it seems strange that so great a celebrity as they must have obtained should have died away. There is not so much as one tradition, however obscure, among the inhabitants, respecting these relics, and they therefore afford the less interest to the traveller, who can only look at the remains and go away as wise as he came.

There was once a laird, however, who was not willing to give up the whole matter as a mystery without examination. He came again and again, sometimes attended only by his steward, and sometimes by strangers as curious as himself. He destroyed the average we have spoken of, greatly to the joy of his island tenantry, and to

the annoyance of the old steward who had the charge of this range of islands, together with many more in the neighbouring seas, and who much preferred talking big in the name of the laird, and doing what he pleased among the people, to following his principal in his excursions, standing by to hear the statements of the tenantry, and receiving directions concerning their affairs.

Notice of a visit from the laird was sometimes given and sometimes not, according as Callum, the steward, happened to be in Garveloch or elsewhere. He had an apartment of his own at the farm above-mentioned, which he occupied sometimes for a few days together, and which was therefore better furnished with accommodations than any other space between four walls in the island. The convenience of having this apartment prepared in case of the weather being too boisterous to permit a return on the same day to the mainland, induced the proprietor to send notice when Callum was on the spot to make arrangements. When he was not, such notice served no purpose, as the people at the farm had no power to levy supplies, and would not have known how to use them when procured, so uncivilized were their habits and manners. On one occasion, the omission of such notice caused the laird to witness a sight which he had never before beheld in all its simplicity,—a funeral among his tenants.

As the bark which contained himself and a party of friends approached Garveloch, one fine

spring morning, he saw two boats nearing the landing-place before them. As these vessels were rocked in the surf, snatches of a hoarse and wild music came from them, rising above the roar and dash of the waves. The sound was not that of any instrument, but of the rough voices of men, and it ceased when the labours of landing began. This was done with all possible awkwardness, confusion and noise, and then the companies of the two boats took their way up the rocks without perceiving the laird's vessel, which was still at a considerable distance. Some of the men bore on their shoulders the body about to be interred, and the rest followed at their own pace, not forming themselves into any order of march, or seeming to be united by any common object. The last of the stragglers disappeared behind a projection of the rock, while the laird was preparing to be carried through the surf by two of his boatmen. He pointed out to them, with great exactness, the spot where they should land the rest of the party when they should return from Ilachanu to join him at dinner, and then took his way alone in the track of the funeral party.

He reached the burying-ground just as the ceremony was concluded; for funerals in the Highlands are hurried over with an apparent negligence and levity which shock the feelings of those who have been accustomed to the solemnity which such a service seems fitted to inspire. The only solemnity here arose from the desolation of the place. It was unenclosed, so that the wild cattle had gone over it, defacing the tomb-

stones and cropping the coarse herbage which grew more plentifully here than elsewhere. Thistles and docks appeared where there were some traces of a path, and the fragments of broken crosses lay as rubbish beside the newly-dug grave. The laird looked among the group for the mourners. They were easily distinguished by their countenances, though they shed no tears and spoke no word. They were three boys, the two elder of whom were strong, ruddy, well-grown youths, apparently of the ages of sixteen and fourteen. The third was either some years younger, or was made to look so by his smallness of size and delicacy of appearance. He fixed the attention of the laird at once by the signs of peculiarity about him. His restlessness of eye and of manner was unlike that which arises in children from animal spirits, and contrasted strangely with the lost and melancholy expression of his countenance. His brothers seemed not to forget him for a moment, sometimes holding him by the hand to prevent his wandering from them, sometimes passing an arm round his neck to control his restlessness, sometimes speaking to him in the caressing tone which they would use to an infant. The laird, learning from some who passed out of the burying-ground that these boys were orphans, and had been attending the funeral of their father, determined to learn more about them from themselves.

"You three are brothers, I find. Which of you is the eldest?"

"I am two years older than Fergus," answered Ronald, "and Archie is twelve, though he looks less."

"And have you any brothers and sisters younger than you, Archie?" enquired the laird.

Archie looked in the gentleman's face for a moment, and then away again.

"He speaks to nobody but us," said Ronald. "He heeds no other voice,—that is, no man's or woman's voice. He knows the low of the cattle and the cry of the sea-fowl when a storm is coming. He wants to be down among the rocks now, ye see. We're going, Archie, we're going. Stay a minute.—He's not like us, your honour sees."

"I see, I see. He looks quite lost."

"To a stranger," said Fergus, "but not to us. We know his ways so well that we can always guide him, except when he is at the highest and lowest, and then it is best to leave him to himself till the fit is over."

"He must require a great deal of watching; is there no one to take care of him but you?"

"He takes to no folly, only to sport, Sir; and he is wiser than we about many things, and sees farther. He is always housed before a tempest, or safe in a hole in the rock, like the birds he seems to learn from, while we breast the wind as we may, far from home. When he is dull or low, Ella takes better care of him than we could do. She just puts fresh heather under him and sings, and he sleeps sometimes many days together."

"And who is Ella?"

"Our sister, your honour; our elder sister. She is down by the boats, and she will be glad to see your honour, for we have much to say to you or to Mr. Callum. Where will your honour please to see Ella?"

"We will walk down to the boats, Ronald; or, if your sister should wish to speak with me more privately, perhaps she will come up here."

Ronald cast a hurried look at the new-made grave, and then said to Fergus,

"Run down, Fergus, and ask Ella to come up to the cross yonder. The laird will wait for her there: and let Archie go with you; he is in a hurry for the shore."

During the few minutes that they waited at the cairn or heap of stones in which the cross was planted, the laird learned from his companion something of the domestic circumstances of this orphan family. Their mother had died at Archie's birth, and their father had been growing infirm for many years, so that almost the whole charge of the family had rested upon Ella since she had been old enough to support it. Her brother praised her only by stating facts; but these facts conveyed an impression that she must be a woman of extraordinary energy, and one who deserved all the respect and love with which her brothers could regard her. It was very natural that, while listening to a tale of peculiar interest concerning her, the laird should picture her to himself as corresponding in outward appearance to the elevated idea which was

given him of her character; and it was with some disappointment that he looked upon her for the first time. She appeared as much older than she really was, as Archie looked younger. She might have been taken for his mother, though she was, in fact, no more than five-and-twenty. Tall and gaunt in person, and thinking as little of adornment in dress as her country-women in general, on ordinary occasions, there was nothing at first sight to attract a stranger. Her feet were bare, according to the universal custom; her hair, unconfined by any cap, hanging down from under the plaid which she had drawn over her head, the plaid itself strapped round her in preparation for rowing her boat home, she looked so unlike the maidens of a civilized country, that the laird, well as he knew his own tenantry, was startled. When he looked again, however, and observed the strong expression of her eye, and of her weather-stained features, when he remembered what toils she had undergone, and that her heart was now troubled and striving with natural grief, he felt that he was wrong in expecting softness where it was not to be found.

"Have you anything to say to me, Ella; any complaint to make?"

"No complaint, your honour. Murmurs will not heal the grief of this day, and other troubles are nothing. I only wished to speak to your honour about the lads and myself; how we are to live and what to do."

"Well; have you settled what you wish? and

is there difficulty with Callum, or any body else?"

"Your honour knows our farm, where we have lived till now. Mr. Callum has given notice whenever he found my father ill, that we must quit it at his death. So we are going to quit."

"And what else would you do? Your brothers are not old enough to manage a farm."

"Mr. Callum is right, doubtless; and I have no desire to keep on what we could not keep up. As for where we are to go,—we should be quite easy in mind, if your honour would order the place down below to be made weather-tight for us, and fix a rent upon it. Your honour would not ask more than we could pay."

"What, that half-ruined cottage in the bay, with the croft behind it! How could you live there? There is not a fence complete, and not an ear of barley has grown there these many years."

"Your honour would have the fences mended at the same time with the cottage; and there is the fishing to depend on, as well as the ground, and the rocks shelve conveniently there for the weed, and Ronald could sell kelp when I sell fish; and Fergus could bring us in peat,—and as for Archie, the nearer the sea, the happier he is. So I hope your honour will let us try the place."

"It is a wretched place, Ella. I think we might find something better for you. There are patches of richer soil in the vallies. Surely

you had better settle in a more sheltered situation. The wind will blow away your soil and seed together before it has time to strike root."

"We cannot get out of sight of the sea, on Archie's account, sir."

"He would never be happy between green hills," added Fergus. "We should ever be missing him from home, and finding him in the old places: but if we settle on the beach, he will not be tempted to stray."

"Though he could not stray very far, your honour, I am easier to have him under my eye, which might be, if I lived by fishing."

"That is scarcely a woman's business, Ella. It brings toil and hardship to the strongest men."

"It is my business, your honour; and it is not the blackest night, nor the stormiest day, that can weary me, thanks to Him that gives strength where it is wanted. Would you be pleased to grant me what I ask, and let me know with your own lips, what the rent shall be?"

"Let us go to the place, and see what it looks like."

While they proceeded down the steep to the beach, Ella leading the way, the laird marked her stern demeanour and masculine gait, and could not fancy her singing her idiot brother to sleep, and couching him on fresh heather. Presently, however, his idea of her was amended. Archie came sauntering along the shore to join them, and yet with every appearance of not observing them. He held a bunch of sea-bird's feathers, which he thrust into Ella's hand without looking

at her, but glanced back when he had passed, as if to see what had become of them. Ella had thrown back the plaid and stuck them in her hair, where they remained till he was out of sight, when she threw them away and resumed her plaid.

"The people at the farm are relations of yours, I think, Ella?"

"They are fourth cousins of my mother's; and disposed to be kind to us for her sake: and that is another reason for our settling here."

"But what will they think of such a dreary place in comparison with their barley and oat fields, to say nothing of the house, with two rooms, each as large as this cottage, besides Callum's apartment?"

'It is what we think that matters most."

"Very true. Now show me the boundaries that you would mark out if you had your choice."

"The rent will mark the boundary best: but we should like, besides this field, to have the slope of the hill behind for our pony to graze on. We must have the pony to carry the weed, and to draw the harrow, in case of my being out at sea at the time. And I should like to take in a corner of the peat moss yonder; that is all we wish for behind. Then Ronald must be free to cut weed some way along these ledges to the left: they shelve better than those on the other hand. Then the cottage should be new roofed, and the fence put up; and your honour will name the rent."

"You shall not be pressed for that, Ella. It would not be reasonable in a situation like this."

I hope your honour sees we beg no favour," replied Ella. "Ask Mr. Callum, and he will tell you our rent has ever been ready, whether we feasted or fasted: and ready it shall be, if it be God's will to let the sea and land yield us their own."

"Better to fast and pay, than feast and owe," said Fergus.

"Right, very right, Fergus. Well; you shall have your way; and I will consult with Callum about the rent, and have the place made ready as quickly as possible. Here he is. Let one of the lads come up to me at the farm, an hour or two hence, and I will name the rent; meantime, you can join your friends."

Instead of going towards the boats, however, Ella slowly proceeded up the rocks, in the direction of the burying-ground. The lads looked as if they would fain have stayed to listen; but a glance from their sister sent Fergus to look for Archie, and Ronald to join the little funeral party, who were carousing as if it had been a wedding.

"There will be tears in those eyes within these few minutes, if there is nobody nigh," said Callum, looking after Ella as he came up. "They have held tears, for as dry as they seem. Since her father began to fail, I, for one, have seen heart-drops, though she would have had me think it was but the wintry wind."

"She has a proud spirit, Callum."

"Proud! her pride ill becomes one that lives under your honour, and it is more than I know

how to master. There is no bringing her down; and if she puts her spirit into her brothers, they will be beyond my reach quite."

"How do you mean, Callum? Why should you bring them down?"

"Only to make them like others that live under such as you,—grateful and humble, and ready to obey."

"To obey your pleasure, I suppose. No Callum, there has been far too much servile obedience among the lower orders of our people, one sign of which is their revengeful and turbulent temper. If they were less ready to watch our pleasure in matters that do not concern them, they would do fewer deeds that call for revenge, and have fewer causes of quarrel. This proud woman, as we call her, has a peaceable temper, I hope and believe?"

"Peaceable enough, your honour, or I own I should have picked a quarrel with her before now, for I do not like her any more than I fancy she likes me. But there has never been occasion for any words; for out comes the pouch as sure as I show myself to gather the rent; and there is the dinner and the whiskey on the table for me to take or leave, as I like. She never kept me waiting, or stinted her hospitality, or got into a quarrel with her neighbours that I could take hold of."

"Then for what, in the name of wonder, Callum, would you have her be grateful and ready to obey? I never did her any service that I am

aware of, (though I hope to do some yet,) and I know of no title to her obedience that either you or I can urge. Can you tell me of any?"

Callum stared, while he asked if one party was not landlord and the other tenant.

"You are full of our Scotch prejudices, I see, Callum, as I was once. Only go into England, and you will see that landlord and tenant are not master and slave, as we in the Highlands have ever been apt to think. In my opinion, their connexion stands thus,—and I tell it you, that you may take care not to exact an obedience which I am far from wishing to claim from my tenants,—the owner and occupier of a farm, or other estate, both wish to make gain, and for this purpose unite their resources. He who possesses land wishes to profit by it without the trouble of cultivating it himself; he who would occupy has money, but no land to lay it out upon, so he pays money for the use of the land, and more money for the labour which is to till it (unless he supplies the labour himself). His tillage should restore him his money with gain. Now why should the notion of obedience enter into a contract like this?"

"I only know," replied Callum, "that in my young days, if the laird held up a finger, any one of his people who had offended him would have been thrown into the sea."

"Such tyranny, Callum, had nothing to do with their connexion as landlord and tenant, but only with their relation as chieftain and follower. You have been at Glasgow, I think?"

"Yes; a cousin of mine is a master in the shawl-manufacture there."

"Well; he has labourers in his employment there, and they are not his slaves, are they?"

"Not they; for they sometimes throw up their work when he wants them most."

"And does he hold his warehouse by lease, or purchase?"

"He rents it of Bailie Billie, as they call him, who is so fierce on the other side of politics."

"If your cousin does not obey his landlord in political matters, (for I know how he has spoken at public meetings,) why should you expect my tenants to obey me, or rather you—for I never ask their obedience? The Glasgow operative, and the Glasgow capitalist, make a contract for their mutual advantage; and if they want further help, they call in another capitalist to afford them the use of a warehouse which he lets for his own advantage. Such a mutual compact I wish to establish with my people here. Each man of them is usually a capitalist and labourer in one, and, in order to make their resources productive, I, a landholder, step in as a third party to the production required; and if we each fulfil our contract, we are all on equal terms. I wish you would make my people understand this; and I require of you, Callum, to act upon it yourself."

The steward made no reply, but stood thinking how much better notions of dignity the old laird had, and how much power he possessed over the lives and properties of his tenants.

"Did this croft pay any rent before it was let out of cultivation?" enquired the laird.

"No, your honour; it only just answered to the tenant to till it, and left nothing over for rent; but we had our advantage in it too; for then yon barley-field paid a little rent; but since this has been let down, that field has never done more than pay the tillage. But we shall have rent from it again when the lease is renewed, if Ella makes what I expect she will make of this croft."

"Is there any kelp prepared hereabouts, Callum?"

"Not any; and indeed there is no situation so fit for it as this that Ronald is to have. There is nothing doing in Garveloch that pays us anything, except at the farm."

"Well, then, Ella can, of course, pay nothing at first but for the use of the cottage, and the benefit of the fences, &c. Is there any other capital laid out here?"

"Let us see. She has a boat of her own, and the boys will bring their utensils with them. I believe, sir, the house and fence will be all."

"Very well: then calculate exactly what they are worth, and what more must be laid out to put them in good condition, and tell me; the interest of that much capital is all that Ella must pay, till we see what the bay and the little field will produce."

The laird next gave particular directions what repairs should be made, and that there should be no delay in completing them, and then left Callum to make his estimate, bidding him follow to the farm when he had done.

Chapter II.

A HIGHLAND FARM.

There was such a bustle at the farm as had not been seen for many a day. At the first alarm of company landing, the girls of the family unyoked themselves from the harrow which they were drawing over the light, sandy soil, and hastened into the house, where their mother had already begun her preparations. One of them set about fanning the smouldering peat fire with the torn skirt of her woollen petticoat, while the other climbed upon the settle to take down one of the regiment of smoked geese which hung overhead from a pole, in somewhat the same kind of arrangement in which they had once winged their flight through the upper air. Lean, black, and coarse, the bird would have been little tempting to the appetite of a stranger; but as all the approaching company were not strangers, it stood a fair chance of being eaten with relish. The mother, while calling to one or another to bring out a cheese from the press, and barley-cakes from the cupboard, was now engaged in bringing potatoes to light from under her own bed, and taking off the cream from pans which were hidden from common observation by a curtain of peat-smoke.

The goose being set to boil, and the potatoes ready to be put into the same pot in due time,

(possibly in order that the oil from the bird might save the trouble of buttering them when they came to table,) the readiest of the two maidens hastened to exhibit the snow-white cloth of ancient home manufacture, which covered, on rare festivals, the table in Callum's apartment. By the time it was spread out to view, it displayed, besides all its varieties of pattern, a further diversity, not intended by the original designer. Here a streak of yellow oil imbibed from the goose; there a brush of mould from a potatoe; here a few harmless drops of cream, and there a corner dabbled in more fragrant whisky, were all new for the occasion. The next thing to be done, was to unpack the baskets of provisions which, out of consideration for the stomachs of the strangers, had been sent in the boat by the laird's housekeeper. What jostling of helpers, what jingling of bottles, what spilling of everything that could be spilt, what soiling of all that was solid! It was well for those who were to eat, that they saw nothing of this household preparation; if they had, neither the fresh sea-breeze, nor the exercise they had taken, would have availed to give a relish to their meal. To beguile the impatience they began to feel for their dinner, some surveyed the farm, some seated themselves on a bench beside the door, to regale their eyes with the splendid view of sea and islands which presented itself: and these occasionally conversed with the farmer's sons,—two boys, who stood staring at a little distance, and were, after much perseverance, prevailed upon to speak.

"What is your name?" asked a lady of the younger boy.

He put three fingers in his mouth and stared, but made no reply; and it was some minutes before it appeared that his name was Rob.

"Well; now you have told me your own name, tell me the name of that island, that looks so black with the shadow of the cloud upon it."

"That's Ilachanu."

"No, no. Ilachanu lies the other way, and we have just come from it. Use your eyes, my man. How should you know which I mean if you stand with your back to it?"

"It's Garveloch, maybe."

"Nay; this is Garveloch that we stand upon. One would think it had no name, by the little you know about it."

"It has not any name," cried the boy brightening.

"Well; why could not you say so before? Do you ever go there?"

"I have been there."

"What do you go there for?"

"Father takes me in the boat."

"And what do you do when you get there?

"We go and then we come back again."

"I suppose so: but do you fish, or get eggs, or visit your friends, or what?"

Rob laughed stared, and then looked at his brother, who co veyed with some trouble that nobody lived there. The lady next tried to make something of him.

"What do you go to that desert island for, my lad?"

"Why was you wanting to know?"

"Only out of curiosity. If your errand there is a secret, say so, and I will not ask you."

The boy laughed, and said they went sometimes for one thing and sometimes for another; and this was all that could be made out.—What was the distance? was the next question.

"It may be twelve mile."

"Twelve! it cannot be so much surely."

"Maybe 'tis five."

"I do not believe it is more than two.

"Indeed, I'm thinking ye're right."

"You do not seem to know much about the matter."

"Indeed, I know nothing about it."

And so forth, upon every subject started: nor did their father appear much more enlightened in his way.

"The cattle seem to have done your field a world of mischief," observed an English gentleman, "and no wonder, with such a pretence of a fence as that. How long has it been broken down?"

"Indeed I can't remember."

"Not this year, or last," said his landlord, "for I remember advising you three seasons ago to make your boys clear the ground of these stones, which would have built up your wall presently.—You said you would, and I suppose you still mean to do it some day."

"O aye, some day; and I have spoken to the lads many a time."

"Speaking does not seem to have done much good."

"Indeed, your honour's right."

"Set about it yourself, I advise you, and then perhaps they will work with you, if you can't prevail upon them by other means."

"Maybe I will some day."

"I see no stock except a shaggy pony or two, or the few black cattle on the moor there," observed the English gentleman.

"There are both pigs and poultry, if you could find out where they are," said the laird laughing.

The gentleman looked round in vain, and then applied to farmer Murdoch himself.

"Do ye think we've no more cattle than them?" asked he proudly. "There are many more of the kine down below fishing."

"Cattle fishing! What do you mean?"

"I just mean what I say,—the kine are getting fish for themselves in the pools below, and the pigs——"

The laird explained to his friend that all domestic animals, even horses, relish fish when their other food is poor of its kind; and that it is the custom of the native cattle to go down to the beach at low water, and help themselves out of the pools in which fish have been left by the retiring tide.

"Well, Murdoch; and your pigs and poultry, —where are they? Do your pigs live on wild ducks, and your fowls on sea-weed?"

"Na, na," said Murdoch. "Where should they be but yonder? Ye'll see them when ye go in to dinner."

"What! in the house?"

"To be sure," said the laird. "As soon as you enter, the pig will run between your legs, and the fowls will perch upon each shoulder, and then you will be asked where the poor beasts could be better. If ever accident should oblige you to sleep in a farm-house hereabouts, examine your bed lest a sucking-pig should have taken possession before you, and in the morning, look for eggs in your shoes before you slip your feet into them.—But see, you must make acquaintance with these domestics out of doors for once. Here comes the old grunter, and there are the fowls fluttering as if they liked the day-light no better than bats."

In honour of the guests, the house was cleared of live stock, and their banishment was a sign that dinner was ready at last.—The meal was conducted with tolerable decency, as in addition to the boatmen who waited on the guests, Callum had arrived to keep things in order, and do the honours of his apartment. By dint of swearing at one, flinging his Highland bonnet at another, and coaxing a third, he procured a change of trenchers, when his guests turned from fish to fowl, and thence to cheese. This change did not much matter to those who ate of the provisions of the farm-house, for everything had a smack of the sea. The cream was fishy, the cheese was fishy, and the barley bannocks themselves had a salt and bitter flavour as if they had been dipped in sea-water; so at least the English gentlemen thought, remembering how the cattle fed, and having seen the land manured

with sea-weed. As it was certainly pure fancy as far as the barley-cakes were concerned, it might have been so in the other cases; but he turned with much greater relish to the provisions which had been brought from the mainland.

Ella arrived before the meal was over, and waited outside till the laird could speak with her. His first question, when he took his seat on the bench beside the door, and his tenant stood before him, was, what had made her brothers so unlike the boys within, and most of the other lads belonging to the islands? He knew that they had been early taught industry by their father's example; but who had instructed them to husband that industry, to make use of eyes, ears, and understanding as well as limbs? Who had made them intelligent and skilful as well as laborious?

"How does your honour know they are so?" asked Ella, for once following the Highland fashion of answering one question by another.

"I saw at a glance that they were intelligent, and Ronald told me enough while we were waiting for you to show that you know better how to live with a little than these cousins of yours with much. How did you all learn?"

"Did Ronald tell you about Angus?" asked Ella, her eye for the first time sinking under that of the laird.

"Merely that Angus taught you the management of a boat, as he had learned it in dangerous places abroad. Angus is a relation, I suppose, or only a friend?"

"A friend; and he taught us all many things that are little thought of here. My father ever said we should do well if we had Angus at hand to advise us."

"I suppose he will come and advise you again, Ella, at such an important time as this. Will you not send for him? Can I carry any message to the mainland, for I hear that it was from over the water that he used to come."

Ella answered in a somewhat stern voice, that if ever he came again it must be from over the water, for that he had been in foreign parts for five years, and nothing had been heard of him for long.

"Five years! then he could not have taught her brothers much, so young as they must have been when he went away." Ella replied that he taught her whatever her father could not, and her brothers learned of her.

"Perhaps," said the laird, "if his friends expected to hear of him, something prevented his sending to them."

"No doubt," replied Ella.

"What do you imagine it could be, Ella?

"Perhaps he is dead," said she quietly, but still looking on the ground.

"You do not suppose he has forgotten his old friends? yet, such things do sometimes happen, Ella."

She made no answer; and the laird saw by the deep colour which made itself seen through her weather-worn complexion, that he had gone too far. He was very sorry; and now wondered at

his own slowness in perceiving the true state of the case; but there was so little in her appearance to suggest the idea, and she seemed so wholly devoted to her brothers, that he had fancied the connexion with Angus one of pure friendship,—of that friendship which bears in the Highlands a character of warmth, simplicity, and familiarity, not very common in some other places.

"To relieve Ella, the laird spoke immediately of business, relating what was to be done to make the cottage and field tenantable, and explaining to her that, twenty shillings a year being the interest upon the capital laid out, twenty shillings a year was the sum he would take, if she thought she could pay it.—Ella had no doubt of it.

"Try it for a year," said the laird, "and then if either party is discontented, we can change our terms. I hope you will meet with no disturbance from any one, and that you may find all your little plans answer well, so that you may be able to pay rent whenever the time comes for neighbours to settle down beside you and increase the cost of the place you hold. That time will come, I give you warning; and when it comes, I hope you will be rich enough to meet it."

"Surely, your honour, we hope to improve the land, and so to be able to pay more than for the fencing; but how are we to improve the sea, or the ledges where we cut weed?"

"You cannot improve them, Ella; but if you

are in a more favourable situation than your neighbours for obtaining their produce, you must expect to pay for the advantage. If I were to ask a rent to-day for the fishing in your bay, neither you nor others would pay it; you would say 'I will go to some other situation as good, where there is no rent to pay,' and you would settle yourself down in Ilachanu or elsewhere, and keep all you could obtain. But when all these best situations are taken possession of, other comers say to me, 'We will pay you a part of what we get if you will let us have a line of shore that shelves conveniently for our kelping, or where fish is plentiful.'"

"And then," said Ella, "we must pay as much as they offer, if we mean to stay; or take up with a worse situation if we will not pay. Well; I doubt not we can pay your honour duly when that time comes, over and above the twenty shillings for the house and fences. It may be in fish or kelp, instead of money, but we will manage to pay, if Mr. Callum be not hard upon us."

"I shall tell Callum to receive my interest in any shape that it may suit you best to pay it; in fish, or in kelp, or in grain, or even in peat. This is but fair considering how far you are from any market. As for the real rent, do not trouble your head about that at present. It will be long before you will be called on for any; and I only mentioned it to show you what you have to expect if you grow rich."

"Will our growing rich make us liable to pay what your honour calls real rent? You will ex-

cuse my asking, but I like to know what is before us."

"Your growing rich will tempt people to come and try their fortune; and then, as I said, the best situations must pay for being the best. Is not this fair?"

"To be sure; your honour would not ask any thing unfair."

"That is not enough, Ella. If there should be a new laird by that time—"

"God forbid!" exclaimed Ella. "A new laird would not come to Garveloch in this way, like your honour, or listen to what your people have to say."

"But answer me," said the laird, smiling, "Would you object to pay rent, in the case I speak of, whoever might be laird?"

"Surely no," replied Ella, "unless I could better myself by moving; which I could not do if all situations as good as my own were taken up."

"And how much would you be willing to pay?"

"Let's see. If we had over and above, at the end of the year, two barrels of herrings and half a ton of kelp, we'll say,—I would find out how much we should have over and above, in the same time, in the next best place; and if it was one barrel of herrings and a quarter of a ton of kelp, I would pay the difference,—that is one barrel of herrings and a quarter of a ton of kelp, rather than move.

"Very right; and then you would be as well off in the one place as in the other. There would still be a fair profit on both."

"And I am sure your honour would not ask more than our profits would come to."

"There would be little use in my asking, even if I wished it, Ella; for it would not be paid. Your neighbour would not settle beside you, unless the place answered to him; and if I demanded more of you than the difference between your profits and his, you would, of course, move to a situation like his?"

"I should be sorry to move," said Ella, looking downwards to her new place of abode, "but, in such a case, I must."

"Such a case will not occur, Ella; for we are not so foolish as to let our farms and cottages stand empty from our asking more rent than they can pay."

"I am not afraid, sir, of having to give up our place. Whenever there is a rent, it will be small at first, I suppose?"

"Yes, and it will grow very slowly in a wild place like this, and it may be years before it bears any at all. In the meanwhile, tell your brothers what I have been telling you."

Ella promised and then proceeded to the one thing more she had to say. It was a request on Archie's behalf,—a petition that he might amuse himself as he pleased upon the Storr, a high rock, formed like a pyramid, that stood out from one point in the bay in which Ella's cottage stood. This rock was an island at high water, being joined to Garveloch only by a strip of sand, which was overflowed twice every day. Myriads of sea-birds haunted this rock; and Archie hav-

ing once found his way to these, his favourite companions, could not, his sister believed, be kept from going continually. The laird gave ready permission, only offering a caution against the perils of the tide, rising and falling as it did perpetually in the very path. Of this, Ella had no fear; for not the most skilful seamen could be more cautious, or appear more knowing than Archie, when he had to do with the tide. His sister observed that he had never put life or limb in the way of peril; and this caution so peculiar to children in Archie's state, went far to confirm the island superstition that the poor boy was under special invisible protection, and therefore screened from ill usage at the hand of man, as well as from natural perils.

The Storr being yielded to Archie as freely as the rocks to Ronald and the peat-moss to Fergus, Ella's business was done, and her gratitude secured,—gratitude offered as soon as deserved, and in greater abundance than the laird thought the occasion required, however Mr. Callum might complain of the absence of this prime qualification of a tenant. Ella's gratitude was not eloquent, but the laird saw enough of its effects upon her countenance and manner to wonder at the degree of satisfaction caused by the present arrangement. He kindly bade Ella farewell, and while she rapidly descended the rocks by one path, he sought his party by another.

He found his companions in great consternation, and the boatmen looking about on the beach, as if for something which had been dropped. What were

they looking for,—a bracelet, a brooch, or was it a watch? Ornaments and valuables should not be trusted abroad on such expeditions.—O it was nothing of that kind; it was the boat they were looking for! The boat! and did they expect to find it among the shingles, or hidden under the sea-weeds? Who had drawn it up on the beach or moored it in the cove? Nobody could lay claim to the praise of such a service; the boat had been left to itself, and had, of course, drifted down the Sound with the tide, and was probably dashed to pieces. While the responsible persons were bandying reproaches, the English gentleman began to anticipate the fate he had been warned of, —a pig for his pillow, and eggs in his shoes, if indeed he could hope for the luxury of a bed, or of liberty to put off his clothes. The laird ordered the only measure now in their power,—to borrow the boat in which Ella and her brothers were about to return home. The farmer promised to house his relations for the night, and to send them back when his boat should return the next morning.

After waiting more than an hour, the people appeared at a great distance on the beach bearing the boat, instead of on the sea, being borne by the boat. The farmer explained that this was, perhaps, the shorter way, as the jutting rocks must have compelled them to make a wide circuit.

"Where are the oars?" said the laird, as they approached; whereupon they once more looked around them, saying, they thought the oars had

been safe enough though the boat was gone. It was not the case, however, and more messengers were dispatched for Ella's oars. The ladies began to shiver and look at each other, when one of their companions observed it would be terribly late and very dark before they could get home.

"Late, but not dark," said the laird; "you forget how long our twilight lasts. We shall be able to see our way till midnight.—Come, make haste with your stowage, my good man. But look here! how are you to row? The pins are out that should fix your oars."

They had disappeared since morning, Fergus said, and he could not imagine how; he and his brother never pretended to row without, and it was not they who had loosened the pins. It was of more importance to supply the pins than to find who had taken them. Farmer Murdoch sent his boys to pull some teeth out of his wooden harrow, and, after another hour, they were fitted in, the boat launched with the ladies in it, and all apparently ready at last. No sooner, however, had the little vessel left the cove, than it was found to be a pity that there was no sail, as the wind seemed likely to be favourable, and might make up for lost time. In the midst of doubt and debate, the rowers put back, waving their bonnets to Murdoch and his party, who were ascending the rock.

"What's your will?" cried all on shore.

"A sail! a mast!" answered all in the boat. One went one way and another another, to find a pole for the mast, and a broomstick for the yard,

and blankets to make a sail. There was no step for a mast, nor provision for a rudder; but no matter! The pole was tied with twine to one of the benches, and an oar was held at the helm, while the blankets were pinned together with wooden skewers, and managed by means of a scarlet garter tied to the corner, and thus transferred from the knee of one of the boatmen to his hand. The preparations being completed, the progress of the party was again watched by Ella, who anxiously observed the length of the shadows from the rocks upon the bay. When the boat emerged from the shadow and was caught by the wind, it appeared likely to be blown due north, and the party might have been landed very wide of their destination, if a little puff of wind had not carried the sail overboard, and obliged the men to take to their oars after all. It was evident, from there being no delay, that nobody was lost or injured, and Farmer Murdoch was, therefore, at liberty to laugh when he saw his blankets, with their scarlet ornaments, gently floated down the Sound, and seeming to excite the curiosity of the sea birds, which made a dip, in their evening flight homewards, to look at this new marine production.

Chapter III.

THE FIRST EXCURSION.

The laird's orders being too positive to be disobeyed, Ella and her brothers were permitted to enter their new dwelling by the time the herrings began to appear from the deep seas to the north. As Ella was anxious to be preparing her resources against the rent day, she watched the first signs of the approach of the fish, determining to try the experiment of selling them fresh to the people at the other end of her island, who, having no boats, could not fish for themselves. Ronald was going out to his usual labour in the field one July morning, when he observed Ella looking first up to the sky and then abroad over the glittering Sound in which the islands lay, like vessels becalmed, and beyond which arose the blue peaks of Argyleshire.

"The sun is bright over Lorn, Ella; were ye thinking of a trip to-day?"

"Indeed I was,—not with the nets,—time enough for that; but we might try with the hook and see if the shoals are near; but if the sun will not keep out, we shall only lose our day."

"What is Archie going to do?"

"Archie, my man," said his sister, "will ye bring me some eggs this day? See, the fowl are waiting for ye."

"We'll wait a bit," said Ella to her brother:

" if he does not come back in half an hour, we may trust to the sun not to cheat us." So Ronald looked out the rods and hooks, while his sister bustled about the cottage before she girded herself for the oar. While thus employed, she sang in the raised voice with which maidens sing in these islands. Ere long, she turned round and saw Archie sitting at the door-sill fastening a piece of string to a switch, in imitation of the rods Ronald was preparing.

" Well, Archie; have you quarrelled with the birds to-day, that ye are home so soon? And where are my eggs?"

" The fowl must wait," muttered Archie. " I can't play to-day."

' Are ye ill, my lad?" enquired his sister, tenderly passing her hand over his forehead: but Archie withdrew himself and began switching himself with his new rod.

" Ye may go to the field, Ronald; I'm not for the sea to-day," said Ella. And in less than an hour the sky was overcast, and summer storms swept over the Sound at intervals till night.

" We may always trust Archie," observed Ronald. " He has a keener sight into the place of storms than we."

The next day the birds did not wait in vain for Archie. He was stirring as soon as they, having stolen out from his sister's side at dawn, and crossed the bar of sand while the tide was yet low. When the sun peeped above the mountains of Lorn, as fair as on the preceding day,

the little lad shouted and clapped his hands above his head; whereupon myriads of sea-birds rose fluttering round him, and wheeled, and dipped, and hovered with cries that would have dismayed a stranger, but which Archie always gloried in provoking. While they drove round his head like autumn leaves in a storm, the terns and gulls screaming, the auks piping, and the cormorants croaking, the boy answered them with shouts and waved his bonnet over his head. Then he clambered to the highest point he could reach that he might watch the long files of solan geese, as they took their morning flight southwards, and be sure that they were out of sight before he filled his bonnet with their eggs.

His sister and Ronald observed him when they had pushed off from the beach, and were winning their way, each with a steady oar, to the deep waters beyond the bay.

"Fare ye well, Archie," shouted Ronald in a voice which made the rocks ring again; but Archie took no notice.

"He is too busy to mind. See how he peeps over yon ledge that neither you nor I dare climb. I wager he finds a prize there: he's dancing with pleasure. He has taken them all, and down he creeps,—aye, take care, my lad: that's it; now on his knees, and there finding a step with his foot. Ye see he never slips. Now he's down, I'll try to win a look."

Ella sang with all the power of her lungs, and this time Archie turned, clapped his hands and stood still to watch the boat.

'He will not be home sooner than we," said Ronald. "He is happy to-day, and he will wait for the afternoon ebb."

"I have put some more bannocks in his hole," said Ella, "and some fresh water, so he will want for nothing till night."

"And the storm cast up so much weed yesterday," said Ronald, "that he may float all the day, if he likes."

This floating was Archie's favourite amusement, in the interval between the departure of the gannets in the morning and their return from the south at eve. There was a strong current round the Storr, from an eddy below the hole he called his cave quite round the point to a ledge of rocks on the other side of the promontory; which ledge being a favourable spot for embarkation, was called the quay. Archie's delight was to drop feathers, straws, weed, or eggshells, into the eddy, to watch them come up again after they had disappeared, and float round the point, and to find them again collected at the quay. Nobody could please him so well as by giving him a new substance to float; and he brought home many a gannet for the sake of the feathers, more than for the kind smile and stroke of the head with which Ella rewarded such enterprises. She was proud of Archie's feats in bird-catching; and if ever she spoke to a stranger on her domestic affairs, represented Archie as adding to the resources of the household, in no small degree. He seldom exerted himself to hunt the puffins out of their burrows

in the rock, and had not sense or patience to manage snares; but such birds as were stupid enough to go on laying their eggs where they were taken away as soon as they appeared, and such as were tame enough to sit still and be taken by the hand, were Archie's prey. He twisted their necks as he had seen his brothers do, and pouched them in his plaid, and still conceived himself to be on terms of close friendship with the species, fancying that their morning screams were cries of invitation to him, and returning the compliment at eve, by singing southwards from the highest point he could reach, if he thought them late in coming home.

Ella was not mistaken in thinking the herrings were come. There were so many stragglers ready to be caught with newly-tinned hooks, that it was evident a shoal was at hand, and that her nets might be brought into use within a few days.

"See there!" said Ella, when late in the afternoon she and her brother suspended their labour to eat and rest; "it brightens one's eyes to see such a spoil for one day."

"And such fine fish too," replied Ronald. "My heart misgave me this morning lest we should find them like what they were last year. It would be a good thing for such as we if we could judge of herring like cod, and know when we should find them well-fed and most fit to be eaten. Last year they were as lean as a moor, and now they are as plump as a barley-field."

"Thanks be to Him that guides them in the

deep waters," said Ella; "there will be joy under many a roof this season."

Ronald reverently uncovered his head. "I wonder," said he, "that we see no more boats. Yon sloop is from Greenock, I wager; come to take up herrings and kelp. She may keep her anchor down long; for not a hook has been thrown in the Sound till ours, that I could see, and yonder is the first kelp fire within sight this season."

"Ye'll have one of your own, next season, Ronald, and, I doubt not, it will show light betimes. So willing as ye are to help in the field and on the water, we owe ye our toil when the storms come. The field once laid out, and the profits of the fish safe pouched, and Fergus's peat stored, he and I will be your servants in our turn, Ronald, and cut and cull weed as fast as ye can draw it in. The rope is begun already."

"Is it? How thoughtful ye are, Ella! When could ye find time to think of my rope?"

"O, there's ever time for what ought to be provided. I have thinned the pony's tail now and then for a long time, so that I have near hair enough; and when Archie was heavy one day, I thought I could work for you and sing to him at one time; and in the storm yesterday I twisted more. We shall have a long stout rope before the first large drift of weed, and if ye crop the ledges as plentifully as they promise, we shall have a grand fire, one of the first of the season. How proud it will make me,

Ronald, to help to row over your first venture of kelp!"

"Not so proud as it will make me to put the money into the pouch, Ella. To think that I help to pay the laird!"

"I wish it might be into his own hands," said Ella. "I should like to make you the bearer of it then."

"And if not," said Ronald, "it will be honour enough to discharge ourselves of Mr. Callum. Ye have taught me my lesson there, Ella; and when the time comes, I'll show ye a picture of yourself as like as a lad can be to a tall woman. I'll go out beside the door when I hear the pace of his pony on the shingle, and fold my arms in my plaid, and make a reverence about half as low as to the laird, only stiffer. And I'll show the lap of the pouch and say, 'Here are the laird's dues. Would it please you to count them now or when we have pledged your head and ours?'"

"Ye're a saucy lad," said Ella: "you know he can't bear to hear that any one is head over him."

"That is the very reason everybody puts him in mind of it," replied Ronald. "Well; all this time Fergus is holding his pony, and you are spreading the best cloth, and he is looking doubtful whether he shall come in, not liking the coldness of people so far below him, but smelling the hot goose very savoury.—So he comes in to count the dues at any rate, after which—"

"Now, Ronald, hold your tongue, or we shall

have no dues to count. I've done my meal, and see where we have drifted, and the sun going down too."

Ella plied both oars, while Ronald hastily devoured the rest of his bannock. When they got within easy reach of home, they once more drew in their oars and cast their hooks; but as it was with less success than before, Ronald again gave a loose to his tongue, in a way which his awe of his sister would not have allowed if Fergus had not been absent, and if his being Ella's sole partner in an excursion of business had not established an unusual familiarity between them. After providing that Fergus should have his turn as rent-payer, he went on—

"I should like to make Archie do it for once. Do you think we could teach him his lesson?"

"I will not have him tried," said Ella decidedly. "Archie is not made to hold a money-pouch, nor to have any worldly dealings."

"Yet he brings in what helps to fill it."

"And how innocently! It is his love for the things that God made that makes him follow sport. The birds are his playmates while they wheel round his head, and when he takes them on the nest, he has no thought of gain,—and evil be to him that first puts the thought into him! He strokes their soft feathers against his cheek, and watches the white specks wandering through the water like snow-flakes through the air. He does not look beyond the pleasure to his eyes and to his heart, and he never shall; and gold and silver are not the things to give pleasure to

such an eye and such a heart, and he shall never know them."

"Then he can never know how much he owes you, Ella, for the care you take of him. He little guesses how you have spun half the night to make his plaid, and won money hardly to find him a bonnet, and all the toil of your fishing, and grinding, and baking."

"And why should he? He loves me, and all the better for not knowing why. He wears his plaid as the birds do their feathers; he feels it warm, and never thinks where it came from. He finds his barley-cakes and fresh water in his cave as lambs find clover and springs in their pasture. I see him satisfied, and like that he should love me for what costs me no toil,—for singing when he is heavy, and for wearing what he brings me when he is merry. When he lays his hot head in my lap, or pulls my skirt to make me listen to the wind, I value his love all the more for its not being bought."

"I see you always lure him out when Mr. Callum is coming," observed Ronald.

"Yes; and for the same reason I let him hide himself among the rocks the day the laird was here—I have a constant fear that Mr. Callum would be for sending him away; and so I hinder our having any words about the lad. I am easier about that since the laird himself took notice of him so kindly: but Mr. Callum shall never lay a finger on his head, even to bless him, if I can help it. Better keep him innocent of the man entirely."

"He is likely to be innocent of all but ourselves, and now and then the Murdochs; for he sees nobody else."

"He has more companions than we have, too. He makes friendship where we only make war among living things. How he would handle these very fish that we stow away so carelessly! But come; we have caught the last we shall get to-day: let us make haste home and to rest. I must be stirring early and away to make the first winnings for the pouch, and Fergus shall have his turn with me to-morrow."

Ella was determined to try for once whether she could not make her way by land to the north of the island. There was no road, and the difficulty of some of the passes was so great as to render the journey as fatiguing as one of twenty miles. In a strait line, it would not have been so much as two miles; but the many and steep ascents trebled the actual distance, while some were nearly if not quite impassable. If she could once, with her pony, traverse the island, she might be able to judge whether it would afford any market for her fresh fish; and at the same time learn whether there were fertile spots to which her brothers might drive their cattle, and whether it would answer to load their pony with weed for manure or kelp from different parts of the shore.

It proved a toilsome experiment. She sold some of her fish at her own price; but there were so few families, and they could so seldom afford to buy food, that it seemed hardly likely

to answer to give up a whole day of her own labour and the pony's for so poor a return, in addition to the previous day's labour in fishing. They found some patches of good grass among the dells, but too difficult of access to be of much use; and their examination of the shore convinced them that Ronald had possession of the best portion within the circuit of the island. —All this settled, the next object was to prepare for a trip to the Greenock sloop.

Chapter IV.

WHOM HAVE WE HERE?

Ronald had an opportunity of being dignified towards Mr. Callum long before the rent-day came round. The steward's curiosity led him to visit the tenants and see how they were attempting to improve their croft; and one day in October his boat was seen rounding the Storr, and making for the landing-place. Archie happened to be amusing himself on his island at the time, and Mr. Callum was observed by Ella to turn round as if watching the boy's proceedings up to the moment of landing. He looked by no means in his pleasantest mood.

"Good morning," said he, as Ella awaited him at the door of the cottage. "Where are your brothers? I want your brothers."

"Ronald is in the field. I will call him, if

you will please to sit down. He will not detain you."

"Let him alone, pray. The other lads will do as well."

"Fergus is gone a trip to-day to sell his peat; we do not expect him till night."

"To sell his peat! He had better take care of his own supply first, I think. You will want to use all you can get before the winter is over."

Ella replied by opening a boarded window on one side of the cottage, through which was seen, at a little distance, a large well-built stack of peat. She next added some to her fire, that Mr. Callum might not have to complain that she grudged fuel in her hospitality.

"And pray how does Fergus manage to get peat enough for everybody? He keeps within his boundary, I hope."

Ella was too much offended to answer otherwise than by pointing the way to the peat-land, where, however, the steward showed no inclination to go.

"I would have him take care what he is about," continued Callum. "I have the laird's strict orders that the live turf is to be replaced over every inch from which peat is dug."

Ella observed that it was for Fergus's interest to observe this rule on a land which he hoped to hold for a long time, since the peat could not otherwise be renewed.

"No need to tell me that, Ella; but these youngsters are in such a hurry to cut, especially

when they can sell, that they forget the law. Remember, if I find a foot bare, the peat-land is forfeited."

"Your threat is harsh, sir, and if you should act upon it, I should be obliged to appeal to the laird; but let us see whether Fergus has put himself in your power." And she moved on.

"What is all this?" cried the irritable steward, as they walked up the little sloping beach towards the back of the tenement. "Your brothers get the fairies to help them, I think. Who ever saw barley growing out of a round shingle,—clean shingle without any soil?"

"My father saw it, as he used to tell us, in rocky places where soil was scarce; and when we found we could do little with our field this season, Ronald bethought himself of this plan; and it answers very well, you see. We laid down seaweed pretty thick, and dropped our seed into it, and now the manure is changed into food for us."

"Poor grain enough," said Callum.

"Not so good as we hope to raise in our field, but good enough to be acceptable to those who would otherwise have none."

"And pray how long do you mean to let it stand? The wind will soon make it shed its grain, and then much good may the straw do you!"

Ella observed that it had been late sown, so that they were glad to let it stand to the last moment. The autumn was particularly serene and warm, so that the grain was still uninjured;

but it was to be cut the next day but one, when she should have sold her fish and made room for her humble harvest.—What fish? and where was she going to sell it?—She had salted a cask of herrings, and was about to make a trip to the sloop from Glasgow now in the Sound to dispose of the produce of her fishing.

Callum muttered something about their taking good care of themselves; and the too great kindness of the laird not to ask rent for all they held. It should be done soon, he could promise them. —Whenever they had a neighbour who should follow the same occupations, Ella quietly observed, they should be willing to pay rent for the field, and the waters, and the peat-ground, and the kelping-shore.

"And why not sooner, if I chose to ask it?"

"Because it would answer better to us to move to some place in equal condition, where no rent would be asked."

"And where will you find such an one, my lass?"

Ella mounted the rock near, and pointed to one island and another and another where situations as good as this had not yet been taken possession of, and which the laird would be glad to see improved, provided he received the interest of the capital he laid out. Callum observed that she seemed to think herself very knowing, and asked where she got all this wisdom. When he found that the matter had been talked over and settled with the laird himself, he had nothing more to say on that subject.

He was not more fortunate on the next topic. He asked who it was on the Storr that was screaming like a sea-gull, and throwing his arms about as if he was going to fly across the Sound? Ella paused a moment before she replied that it was her brother Archibald; and then underwent a cross-questioning about the lad, and the reasons why he had not been introduced with the rest into Mr. Callum's august presence. An obvious mode of venting his spleen now presented itself. He insisted upon what Ella did not attempt to deny, that the Storr did not come within her boundaries, and followed this up by a prohibition to every one of the family to set foot on the rock. Ella was now truly glad that she had obtained the laird's special permission for Archie to haunt the rock as much as he pleased. Mr. Callum's temper was not improved by learning the fact. He did not pretend to doubt it; for, in the first place, he knew Ella to be remarkable for strict honour; and, in the next, she seemed so guarded on all points, that he began to think it prudent not to expose his authority to more mortifications.

Ronald now appeared, ready to show Mr. Callum what had been done in his department, as well as in Fergus's. Ella cautioned her brother by a look which he well understood, to keep his temper and restrain his tongue, and then returned to her occupations in the cottage. Callum resumed the subject of Archie, but could make little out of Ronald about him; for, besides that the tender respect in which they held

the poor lad made them unwilling to speak of his peculiarities to strangers, Ronald knew his sister's desire to keep Archie out of Callum's notice. He was now rather more discreet than was necessary, and left an impression on the steward's mind that there was some mystery about the boy,—a mystery which must be penetrated.

He did not accept Ella's proffered hospitality, having already ordered his dinner at the farm; but he sauntered down again in the evening to see Fergus come home, and hear whether he had made a good bargain of his peat. A fit of superstition about the fairies came upon him again when he heard that not only was the present cargo sold among the inhabitants of a sandy island near, but so much more was wanted, that Ronald must borrow Murdoch's boat, the first convenient day, and accompany Fergus in their own in another trip to the same market. Callum laughed when Fergus said he had taken no money, his customers not being possessed of any coin; but he brought oatmeal, salt, and a light basket, or rather pouch, made of birch twigs and oatstraw, for Archie to carry eggs in. He was offered oil, but thought they had obtained enough from their fish to last the season. Ella approved his bargain, and said that oatmeal and salt, being both wanted, were more to her than money just now, and would save her a voyage. So Fergus was happy, and nothing remained to be wished but that Mr. Callum would go away. He paced the little beach as if

he was waiting for something, and at last asked impatiently when the younger lad would come home.

"When the tide is low enough for him to cross; maybe in two hours."

This was too long for a cross person's patience; so the steward departed without seeing Archie this time.

The morrow was to be a busy day,—the day of the first sale of salted herrings. As the cask was to be carried on board the sloop, Ella wished her brothers to go with her. She wanted their help, and also desired that they should gain such experience in that kind of traffic as would fit them for going without her on a future occasion: for she did not much like the idea of boarding the vessel and making her bargain among the sailors.

The lads embarked their cask, fitted, for the first time, the wooden key to the wooden lock of their door, carried Archie high and dry through the surf, and deposited him, laughing, beside his sister, and pulled stoutly round the point in the teeth of a strong and chilling wind. Archie was in one of his merry moods this day, which made his sister the less unwilling to leave him with the Murdochs at the farm till evening, which she was about to do. He laughed when the wind drove the spray in their faces, and mimicked the creaking of the oars in their sockets as they strained against the force of a rough sea. He made some resistance to being landed when they reached the cove below the farm, but took

his sister's hand and ascended the cliff with her while repeating that he wanted to go on the sea again.

The Murdochs were good-natured people, when nothing happened to make them otherwise, and they declared themselves delighted to see Archie, and promised to take all possible care of him. Ella reminded them that the only care necessary was to give him his dinner, and see that he did not stray beyond the farm.

When the rowers got fairly out to sea, they were dismayed to find that the sloop had disappeared during the night. There was every reason to fear that they were a day too late for the market, and that the last vessel to be seen that season was now sailing away from them.

"If it be," said Ronald, "we must take a voyage to the Clyde islands, or perhaps to Greenock; and I should not much mind that: Ella could do without us for a few days."

"We must prevent such a waste of time," said Ella; "so pull away southwards, and let us see if we cannot overtake the sloop. She cannot have gone far with this wind. The first of you that wearies, give me the oar."

The boys continued their rowing in silence till Ella desired Ronald to make for a boat some way off and hail it. He did so.

"Holla! Which way lies the Jean Campbell?"

"Gone northwards before the wind."

Northwards! Then she could not have completed her cargo yet; "but would she return

through the same Sounds?" they asked the people in the other boat.

"Hardly likely," was the answer; "but there is another coming up, the Mary of Port Glasgow. If ye clear the point, ye'll see her with all her sails set, unless she has stopped to take in kelp or herrings."

Away went the boat again, and eager were the rowers to learn whether the market was yet open to them. In half an hour they came in sight of the Mary, not sailing before the wind as they expected; but rolling idly on the rough sea, while boats were making towards her from various points of the shores within sight.

When they came alongside, Ella spoke her errand; and on receiving an encouraging answer, would willingly have sent her brothers on board to manage their bargain, while she remained in the boat. But it was too important an affair for them to conduct, inexperienced as they were in traffic; and it was necessary for her to go on deck of the Mary. While talking with the master, and observing no one else, she did not perceive, as Ronald did, that a man on deck who looked like a passenger, was watching her closely, and drawing nearer to listen to what she said. Ronald placed himself beside his sister, and then the stranger looked down into the boat where Fergus remained.

"Will you make room for me, Fergus?" he asked. "Will you take me home with you to see your father and Archie?"

Fergus reddened all over; and when he made his reply, the stranger was moved also.

"Your father dead!" he exclaimed. "I never heard it. Let me come to you that you may tell me all."

"You must ask Ella if there's room for you,' said Fergus; "besides, I don't know who you are."

"Do you ever think of one Angus that you once knew?"

"Aye, often enough, and wonder if he be dead. Why, I do believe you are Angus, sir! Ronald, Ronald! See if this be not Angus back again."

It was Angus; but so changed, that it was no wonder his younger friends did not know him after five years of absence. Ella knew him at a glance, when the sound of his name made her turn her head. She looked steadily in his face, and asked, with a calm voice, what brought him among the islands again?—but her cheek was pale as ashes, and her hands trembled so that she could hardly hold the money which the impatient master was in a hurry to pay her. Angus, as agitated as herself, made no reply to her question, but leapt into her boat in order to assist her down. She drew back immediately.

"Ella! you will let me go home with you. We must not part almost before we have met. I am bound for Garveloch, and you must let me row you home."

"You do not know our present home, Angus. If you choose to seek us there, you will find a welcome; but I cannot take you."

Angus now grew pale. He turned quickly round upon Fergus,—

"Is Ella married?"

"No.

With a light step he sprang back into the Mary, whispering to Ella as he handed her down,

"I have much to say, and am eager to say it. For whatever reasons you refuse to let me go with you, you cannot prevent my following. Farewell now. You will soon see me."

Ella turned back as she was departing to tell him that she had removed, and to describe where she might be found. Encouraged by this circumstance, Angus smiled, and Ella's stern countenance relaxed.—Never had she frowned as Angus did when he heard the seamen jesting on the fishwoman who carried herself as high as a princess to the master. "It is not the way of fishwomen," quoth they, "even when they bring half a cargo, instead of one poor cask like that."

Angus thought to himself that she was a princess,—the princess of fishwomen. He knew her well,—all her thoughts and all her feelings, in former days, and he saw already that she had lost none of her dignity under the pressure of her cares. He presently arranged with the master to meet the Mary at a certain point among the islands, within a few days, for the purpose of removing his luggage; and obtained a seat in a boat whose crew engaged to set him on shore in Garveloch.

Chapter V.

A HIGHLAND NIGHT.

Scarcely a word was spoken in Ella's boat during the return. Her brothers began to revive their recollections of Angus, of what he had taught them, and how he played with them, and of whatever he said and did; but observing that Ella, instead of joining in their conversation, drew her plaid over her head and fixed her eyes on the waters, they kept a respectful silence, and even refrained from asking a single question on the important subject of her traffic with the master of the Mary. The wind still rose and increased the difficulty of rowing so much, that the lads would soon have been disposed to leave off talking, if no restraint had been upon them. At last, Ella observed poor Fergus wiping his brows, though the gale was chill.

"Fergus, give me the oar. I have been very thoughtless,—or, rather, over full of thought,—or you should not have toiled for me all this time. Take my plaid, for this breeze is wintry."

She threw her plaid round him and gave him a slight caress as she passed to take his place.

"Sing, Fergus," said his brother, "it lightens the way."

As soon as he had recovered his breath, Fergus sang an air which Angus used to love to time for them with his oar when he took them out to sea for pleasure, before their days of toil

began. Ella joined her voice, perhaps for the purpose of checking the tears which began to flow faster than at any time since the night of her parent's death. Apparently unconscious of them, she plied her toil and her song more vigorously when the boat neared the cove where they were to take in Archie. They looked out for him, hoping that the song might bring him down to the boat and prevent any loss of time in getting home. Nobody appeared, however, but one of Murdoch's girls, standing stock still on the ridge of the rock. Ella signed and beckoned, and her brothers shouted for Archie; to all which the lass made no other answer than shaking her head like a weathercock.

"Give me my plaid," said Ella, who instantly stepped on shore and mounted to the farm. She could see nobody for some time, and when she did, it was only the girl who had watched her landing.

"Where are all the family, Meg?"

"All gone, except Archie; he's back again. Father and others are gone to the moor for peat, and mother is milking the cows a great way off."

"And Archie? Call him, for we must be going."

"He can't get out," said Meg, grinning, and pointing to Mr. Callum's apartment, the shutters of which were closed. "He's all in the dark, and he has been flogged for stealing the laird's birds, and I don't know how many eggs and feathers."

Ella had scarcely patience to stand and hear the story. Archie, being left to himself, had wandered home and gained his rock. Callum had watched and followed him, and caught the poor boy with a solan goose in his bosom, eggs in his new basket, and a bunch of feathers in his cap. The steward had flogged Archie unmercifully with his cane, partly unaware, it must be hoped, of the true state of the case, since he had told the sufferer that his discipline was meant to teach him not to take what did not belong to him. He brought him back, closed the shutters of his apartment, pushed the boy in, and double-locked the door, telling the children who looked on in terror that they should be served in like manner if they attempted to speak to Archie till he should be released. He had now been shut up three hours, and Mr. Callum was not to be back till night. Ella shuddered when she heard that the boy had looked much flushed when he went in, and had screamed violently till, nobody taking notice, his cry had gradually sunk to a low moaning. She rushed to the door and called him in her gentlest voice. No answer. She sang as she was wont to do when he was ill; and then the moan was heard again.

"He will die unless I can get to him. I know that sound well. Run, Meg, and tell your father Archie will die, if we do not break the door that I may nurse him. Run for your life! —Hush! Archie, hush! I am coming, lad, and we will let in the light again, and you shall see

how the sea is tossing. I am coming, Archie; be patient, lad."

She flew to the cliff to beckon her brothers. In a few minutes, almost everybody came but the one most wanted, Mr. Callum. Everybody was very sorry of course: none more so than those who ought to have prevented this mischief. They were willing to do anything,—to break door or window as soon as desired. But no proper tools were at hand, and the noise terrified Archie so extremely, that it was thought best to let things remain as they were till Callum's return, which could not be much longer delayed. Ella sent her brothers home directly, afraid that she should not be able to keep their tempers within bounds when the enemy should present himself. She waited, pacing up and down the steep rocky path which overlooked her own dwelling, as well as the way by which the steward was expected to approach.

After a while, she distinctly saw her brothers standing in conversation with a third person, beside the gate of the field. Supposing the stranger to be Callum, she watched with the utmost anxiety, expecting each moment to see the lads show some sign of wrath; but their gestures were not those of anger, nor did their companion, on a closer examination, look like the steward. At this instant a voice close behind her made her start.

"So you are come at last, Mr. Callum," said she. "I hope it may be in time to prevent your

committing murder. How do you propose to comfort us if you find Archibald dead?"

"Dead! Pooh, nonsense! let me tell you, madam, I came down just in time to prevent theft this morning. If the laird is pleased to let idle boys play on his estate, he gives no leave for them to steal the produce. I have not done with master Archibald yet; I mean to make a further example of him."

"Ye'll be too late," replied Ella, with a convulsed countenance. "One on whom God himself has put the mark of innocence, one that has been ever under the guidance of good powers,—one that has only been kept here so long by being cherished, and no ill being suffered to come nigh him—is not one to live under your hands, Mr. Callum; and knowing this, I kept him out of your sight, till an evil day has laid him open to blame and punishment. Come, sir, and see if your work is not done; and if not, beware how you finish it!"

So saying, she strode onwards and beckoned him after her; but he stood still. Callum shared largely in the superstitions which abound in the islands, where the strongest and proudest minds are subdued by fears too absurd to affect children in more enlightened places. Connecting in a moment Archie's peculiarities, which he had been unable to understand, Ella's hints of his being the favourite of unseen powers, and all that was extraordinary in herself as she stood with flashing eyes, and a working countenance, and her tall form trembling with some other passion than fear, Callum resolved to be quit of her and the

boy as soon as might be; but above all things to prevent their meeting in his presence, lest they should work some harm upon him.

"Come back, Ella," said he, in a somewhat softer tone; "you will only do harm by going with me. The truth is, I have sent to the laird for his pleasure about the lad, as there happened to be a messenger going. I shall have an answer by the morn, and then I will release your brother,—if you stay out of my sight, not otherwise, I promise you: so go your ways home, and trust the boy with me for the night. You well may, for he never lay in a gentleman's room or on a gentleman's bed before, I'll be bound to say."

All remonstrance, all entreaty, was vain to alter Callum's pretended purpose: so Ella had recourse to a secret plan in her turn. She resolved to steal up to the farm as soon as it should be dark, and every one gone to rest, and to work on Mr. Callum's fears by means which she well understood. She now asked impatiently where the laird was. Not where she could reach him to lodge a counter-plea, the steward answered with a grim smile; he held that part of justice in his own hands. Ella could learn nothing more than she already knew,—that he must be near, as his answer would arrive by morning.

As she was going slowly down to the beach, she met Angus. "If ye have any friendship for us," cried she, showing her surprise only by her raised colour, "if ye ever valued my father's blessing, help us now;" and she related what had just passed. Angus instantly replied that the

aird was at Oban. If so, Ella said, the messenger's boat ought to be in sight; and she looked intently over the troubled expanse of waters, now heaving and tossing in an autumn gale as if they would swallow up the scattered islands.

"One might easily miss a small bark in such a sea," said she, "and the gloom is settling fast. See how the mists are gathering about the Storr! The osprey will scarce find his nest, or the bark keep clear of shoals."

"There he is!" cried Angus. "Just below, yonder, a boat shot out from behind the rock, and now she is labouring with the swell. She has only two rowers. Your brothers shall go with me, and we will reach the laird first."

"Go, and my blessing on you," said Ella. "Bring back justice and a word of kindness for Archie, and I will thank you for ever."

No time was lost; and in a few minutes the two boats were seen rowing as close a race as ever had honour or profit for its object. Ella could not help wondering whether the steward was watching the struggle with all the anxiety that he deserved to feel, and all the shame of being discovered in a falsehood. It was impossible that an answer should return from Oban before the morning, and Callum's having said so was a new proof that he was frightened at what he had done.—The daylight was now failing fast: the Argyleshire mountains lost the red tinge which had been cast upon them from the western sky. All was gray and misty, and when Ella fancied for a moment that her brothers' boat had given

up the race and changed its course, she supposed that her overstrained sight had deceived her; and retired slowly homewards to await the hour when she might make another attempt upon the farm.

It was a dreary night. The wind swept past in gusts, and hail pattered in hasty showers upon her shingled roof, as she sat beside her peat-fire, striving to compose her busy thoughts. She could settle to no employment, but looked out frequently to see if she could discover the moon's place in the sky, in order to form some idea of the time. At length, believing it was near midnight, she equipped herself for her expedition, strapping her plaid close about her, and carrying warm clothing for the boy. While doing this, she fancied she heard a footstep without. She paused, but supposed it could only be the rattling of the shingle as the waves retreated; but, not being perfectly convinced, she looked about cautiously through the darkness as she went forth, and listened intently. Before she had gone many paces, a sudden gleam of moonlight showed her the shadow of a man, standing up against the side wall of the cottage. She quickly retreated, but not through fear. She lighted a slip of pine-wood and without ceremony held it up in the man's face. It was Callum.

"You are come to tell me that Archie is dead," said Ella, with forced calmness. "No wonder you linger by the way."

"He is not dead nor likely to die if, as you say, the good powers are fond of him. I have

left him with them, for he is past my management."

"You have carried him to the sands to be drowned," cried Ella, snatching hold of his cloak which was dripping wet.

"It was more likely I should be drowned than he," said Callum, sullenly. "He scrambled over to the rock as if he saw the fairies waiting for him, and I found my way back as I could, but the water was up to my knees."

"How long since?"

"Not above five minutes."

"There is time yet," cried Ella, hastening in for food and a bottle of milk. While she was making her rapid preparations, Callum, who had followed her, proceeded with his explanations that, as he could do nothing with the boy, who would neither eat, speak, nor sleep, he thought it best to carry him back to his haunt and let those manage him that could; and he hoped it would be the last he should have to do with people of her sort. A half-smile passed over Ella's countenance; she made no reply, but pushed a seat beside the fire, set some barley-cakes and whisky on the table, pointed to the heap of fuel in the corner, and was gone, drawing the door after her. Callum had feeling enough to be stung with the reproach implied in these observances of hospitality. He pushed the food and drink from him and sat, with his hands upon his knees, muttering beside the fire. A thought struck him, he started up and ran after Ella, shouting,

"Let me hold the torch, lass, while you cross, and may be I can get over too and help to bring him home." But Ella, who had already reached the low sand, waved him back contemptuously, and was half through the water before he arrived on the brink. Dashing, foaming, the tide did not look very tempting; and having seen Ella climb the opposite ledge, wring out her wet plaid and stride on, Callum returned, full of mortification, to the fireside.

The torch blew out before Ella reached Archie's hole. As soon as she came within hearing, she tried to attract his attention by the usual methods, but obtaining no answer, began to fear that he had been placed in some other recess of the Storr. She groped her way in, however, and stumbled over him near the entrance. He shrieked as she had never heard him shriek before, and a fierce pang of indignation shot through her heart at him who had first made this innocent being subject to fear. She succeeded in soothing the boy; she lavished on him all the tender words that came with her tears; she cooled his hot forehead; persuaded him to eat, and hoping to make him forget where he was, and that anything painful had passed, she told him tales till he fell asleep with his arms round her neck. She had soothed herself in soothing him, and was too well inured to cold and wet to be much affected by them; so that she too leaned against the wall of the little cave and slept.

It was some hours after, but while the dawn was yet very faint, that Archie roused her by

starting up and running to the mouth of the cave. A red light flickered upon his face as he stood; and his sister following, saw a kelp fire flaming high upon the beach. The season for kelp burning was considered over; but a glance at the boat drawn up on the shingle and at the figures about the fire showed her what it meant. Her brothers were already home, and finding the cottage empty, and not knowing in what direction she was gone, had lighted this fire as the best signal which could intimate their return without alarming Mr. Callum, to whom a kelp fire was one of the commonest of all sights.

"See, Archie, there is Ronald feeding the fire, and Fergus stirring it. They have made the fire to light us home."

But Archie did not clap his hands as usual at the sight of a kelp fire, and seemed disposed to hide himself in the cave. It was because a third figure stood between them and the light. It was the first time he had feared a stranger; and again Ella had to battle with her mingled compassion and indignation. She tried the experiment whether Archie had any recollection of Angus, of whom he had been very fond five years before. She tempted him to a baby game which Angus used to play with him, but which had been laid aside as Archie grew taller. "Ah! Angus, Angus, I want Angus!" cried the boy, just as he used to do, and just as she wished to hear him, for the first time since Angus's departure.

"Do you want Angus? Well, there he is,

standing beside Fergus. Call him and perhaps he will hear you."

Poor Archie tried, but he was too much exhausted to make himself heard to any distance; nor did Ella succeed better, as the wind was against her. For a full hour, she saw the three figures pace the beach, and look intently in all directions before they perceived her; but at last the fluttering of her plaid became visible to them through the grey dawn, and they ran down to the brink of the water, which was still too deep to be crossed on foot, though too shallow for a boat. They waved their caps in token of having succeeded in their errand, and awaited in the utmost impatience the sinking of the water. When the first patch of sand was left dry, Angus plunged through, and, well knowing Ella's heart, gave his first attention to Archie. Ella gave him his cue: he hid his face with his bonnet, let Archie uncover it, as in old days, and was immediately known. Archie's loud laugh was like music to his sister's anxious heart. He put his arm lovingly round the neck of his old playfellow, in order to his being carried home; and though feverish and evidently in pain, showed no greater signs of dulness and depression than on some former occasions of illness.

Ronald was impatient to tell his sister that they had found the laird by Angus having discerned his boat off one of the islands, half way between Garveloch and the shore. Callum's messenger, proceeding to Oban, had overshot

nis mark, and missed giving the first version of the tale which both parties were in haste to tell. The laird had pronounced no judgment, but would probably land on Garveloch, in a day or two, and hear both sides of the question.

"Then," said Ella, "thanks to your zeal, our point is gained."

Chapter VI.

THE SCOTCH ABROAD.

Angus's zeal had indeed been equal to that of the brothers; in addition to which his patience had been most meritorious. He waited till Archie was safe before he said a word of his errand to Garveloch or made any reference to his former friendship with Ella and her family. His turn to be cared for came at last. Ella recovered her courtesy when the little party was seated at the morning meal.

"Welcome to our board, Angus," said she. "You will excuse our being so late in saying the words and offering the hand of welcome."

"Far more easily," said Angus, grasping her offered hand in great emotion; "far more easily, Ella, than the coldness with which you offer it at last. If I were an utter stranger, you could not look more haughty than you do at this moment."

"Nay, Angus; you have yourself ordered your reception. If you have made yourself a

stranger for five long years, you cannot wonder that we look upon you as such."

"I have ever explained, Ella, why I could not come; and as it pleased you to take no notice of my reasons, I left off offering them, though not till after a longer perseverance than you would have condescended to use."

Reasons! How offered? By whom brought? When were they sent? These and many more questions were asked in a hurry by the two lads, while their sister waited in evident anxiety for an answer. It appeared that Angus had written two or three letters before he entered into the service of the nobleman in whose suite he had gone to America. Being there employed in the interior, he had no longer any means of sending to Scotland, but hoped that his former letters had proved him trustworthy; and that when he returned to his native country, he should be able to obtain some intimation that he would be welcome among his old friends. None such having arrived, he now came in person to see whether he was forgotten, or whether the family was dead and dispersed like his own, or what else could have happened. It now appeared for the first time that Ella and her brothers knew neither that his mother had died in Lorn, nor that he had entered into anybody's service, nor that he had gone to America, or returned from abroad.

"Bless me!" cried Angus. "I do believe the fairies are in Garveloch, and Mr. Callum in the right after all! Come, Ronald, can you tell me who is king of England now?"

Ronald looked at Fergus, and Fergus at Ella, and Ella said she heard one of the seamen on board the Mary swear by king George.—Aye; but which king George? This was more than our islanders could tell; and they reminded Angus that till they boarded the sloop for the first time, they had not seen a strange face for years. The laird and Mr. Callum were their only visitors, and politics had never been talked in this island since the rebellion under the Pretender.

Angus said he could not be jealous of their ignorance about his proceedings in Canada, if no tidings of King George ever reached Garveloch. He looked grave, however, when he remarked that such complete separation from the world was a serious disadvantage in their traffic. As long as they knew nothing of the prices which their herrings and kelp bore in the market, they were completely at the mercy of those who came to buy of them.

"There!" cried Ronald with great delight, "I always said we should go ourselves to Greenock instead of selling to sloops in the Sound."

"I do not think so, Ronald. You would pay more in time and trouble than the information would be worth. If there was anybody here who could read a newspaper——"

Nobody within reach, but Mr. Callum, had ever learned the alphabet, and they could not take the liberty of asking him for information, even if he came at the right time to give it.

Angus observed that there would be an end of this difficulty if, as he hoped, he should settle in Garveloch.—In the midst of the shouts of the lads, and the shaking of hands caused by this hint, Angus looked down as bashfully as if he had never crossed the Atlantic and seen the world. He evaded all inquiries as to his plans, and seemed anxious to go back to the past.—He related that after being for some time in the service of the nobleman under whom he went out, he took office, at the particular request of his master, under the surveyor and agents appointed to measure and dispose of lands to new settlers.

"What made your master choose you for that service?"

"Many of the settlers were from our part of the kingdom, and the surveyor and agents were English. Quarrels arose out of their different ways of thinking and managing; and some one was wanted to mediate between them. I am heartily glad I was chosen, for I learned a great deal that I should never have known by other means.—It was not utter banishment either; for I now and then met a face I knew, and could talk with a countryman of friends at home. There was Forbes for one; you remember Forbes, Ella?"

"What! he that was suspected of pitching a man from his boat into the sea after a quarrel?"

"The same. He was innocent, I am convinced; but he was so weary of having it cast up to him, that he went abroad and settled in our district in Canada. He had two neighbours that

I knew something of,—Keith, from Dumbarton, and Canmore the drover. Many a time did we look back together to the bare rocks and bleak moors of Scotland, while we were buried in the thickest of forests.—At those times, we used to wish, for the sake of all parties, that we could send you half our trees, for we were as much troubled with having too many as you with too few."

"Nay," said Fergus, "not too few. There are near a dozen birches on the farm above; and one may see a good many alders in the hollows near where we used to live."

Angus laughed heartily at Fergus's idea of a sufficiency of wood, and explained to him the proportion of trees to an acre in a Canadian forest.

"What can they do with them?" Ronald asked.

"Get rid of them as fast as they can; but it costs vast labour.—Forbes, who was not driven there by poverty, and carried money, was saved the trouble of clearing. He took a fine fertile piece of ground on the understanding that he would have to pay the highest rent of anybody in the neighbourhood. Canmore was the next to settle; and he liking the axe little better than Forbes, paid a sum for having his land cleared; but as his land was not so good as Forbes's, he did not pay real rent for some time."

"Did Forbes begin paying real rent?"

"No; for there was land equally good elsewhere, which he knew he could have for the cost of clearing and enclosing."

"Then he paid the interest of capital laid out, as we do for this cottage and fence, and as Canmore did when he took possession of his land?"

"Just so. He first began to pay rent when Canmore raised corn enough to live upon. Forbes raised five quarters over and above what his neighbour could procure from his land; and then the agent came upon Forbes for rent, and he was willing to pay the surplus for the use of the best land. Then Keith arrived, with his axe in his hand, and two stout sons by his side, and no other wealth whatever; so they paid nothing. They cleared the land themselves, and built their own log-hut, and just managed to raise food enough to support them in the humblest way; and thus they were living when I arrived in their neighbourhood."

"But why do landowners give away land in this manner?"

"They only lent it to Keith till he should have brought it into a condition to pay rent, till which time nobody would have given anything for it; and for this loan they paid themselves by taking rent of Canmore. He raised three quarters more than Keith, and was willing to pay them as rent to keep the land he held."

"Then Canmore paid more than half as much rent as Forbes?"

"No—that would not have been fair; for Forbes's land was as much better than his neighbour's as it had been before, and the difference of rent ought therefore to be the same. Forbes now paid eight quarters."

"That is, five for his land being better than Canmore's, and three for Canmore's being better than Keith's. Then if any body had taken worse land than Keith's, he would have had to pay rent for the first time, and the rents of his neighbours would have been raised."

"Certainly, and very fairly: for no one would take land that was not worth cultivating, and any land which produces more than would make it worth cultivating can pay rent."

"Forbes's time, then, for growing rich," said Ronald, "was before he paid rent at all,—when he kept all the produce himself?"

"Yes; and a good deal of profit he made. He consulted me how he might best employ his capital, which was now double what he began with. He looked about for more land; but there was none but what was inferior to Keith's."

"If he had taken that," said Ronald, "poor Keith must have paid rent, and so must Forbes himself,—not for his new land, but an increased sum for the old."

"I advised him to lay it out rather in improving his old land. He could not, by using double capital, make it produce doubly; but he could make it yield more than inferior new land: but this raised his rent as much as if he had taken in inferior land. If the new land would have produced only three quarters, while the improvement of the old yielded five, it was perfectly fair that he should pay the surplus two quarters for rent."

"Why, then, did you advise him to lay out his capital upon his old land? Either way must

have been just the same to him in point of profit, if whatever was left over was to go to the landlord."

"By no means. Forbes had now a lease of his superior land, so that he could take for his own share all the difference between his present rent and that which he would have to pay when his lease expired. He went on growing rich, since he not only made the fair profits of his capital, but had the benefit of all improvements till the time came for a new lease.—He laid out more and more capital upon his land, and though each time it brought in a smaller return in proportion, and though each would cause his rent to be raised hereafter, he went on improving for a long time."

"What made him stop?"

"Finding that he would not be repaid for a further outlay."

"What did he do with his money then?"

"He came to the surveyor and agent, and told them that the corn raised would sell much higher if there was an easier way of getting it into a good market. There were so few who wanted to buy corn within a convenient distance of this little settlement, that it was sold very cheap indeed, and was often changed away for things not half the value it would have had in a town. Forbes thought it would be worth while to make a good road to join a canal on which there was traffic to many populous places. He offered to advance a part of the capital necessary, if the agent would pay the rest. It

brought him hither, his unpleasant feelings vanished in the presence of the monumental remains which he loved to contemplate. As soon as he had chosen for his place a slab of grey stone under which some one lay buried, half a dozen plaids were ready to sweep away the sand and rubbish which bestrewed it; and the judge took his seat amidst as much deference as if it had been the woolsack.

"Murdoch!" said the laird, "you seem to be in great trouble, and as you are the oldest tenant, you have a right to speak first. What is the matter?"

"More than your honour can remedy; but if ye'll please to be merciful, Providence may bring me through yet."

"Well; let us hear. You cannot pay your rent, I suppose. Are we to have that old story over again?"

"Even so, your honour. We have had such high winds lately that they have been the ruin of me. My seed, both barley and rye, is clean blown away with the soil; and the wall is down, and I have nobody to help me to build it up, for the boys are both tossing in their cribs at this moment, and the Lord only knows whether they will ever come out again except to be laid underground."

"This is a sad story, Murdoch." And the laird turned to Callum to ask if the fever was in Garveloch. Callum knew of no sickness in any other house.

"As to your wall," continued the laird, begin-

ning with the least painful part of the subject, "I feared this accident would happen one of these days. You had not built it up, I suppose? —No!—It seems strange that, while your fields were encumbered with stones and your wall tottering for want of support, you should not have remedied both evils by the simple act of building up your fence. As to the looseness of the soil,—how did you treat it this season?"

Murdoch twirled his bonnet in his hands and looked foolish. "Did you send in the track of the cattle to collect manure?"

"Yes," replied Callum, "that I can testify; they collected a large heap independent of the weed. It darkened the whole window as it lay piled up beside the house."

"And when was it put into its proper place,—into the ground?"

Murdoch again looked foolish, and Callum again answered for him.

"In very good time, sir. You may be sure I would not let it remain where it might breed a fever."

Murdoch being called on to explain why his land was in bad condition if properly manured, owned that he had moved the dung-heap to please Mr. Callum; but not having time to manure his fields, had stowed away the dung in the shed next the room where the family lived.—All the farmer's misfortunes were now accounted for. The laird told him that he was unwilling to add to the distress of a man in misfortune, but reminded him how frequently he had been

warned that he must quit his farm if his own bad management prevented his having his rent ready.

"I will give you one more chance," he continued. "I will provide you with seed (it is not yet too late) on condition that you employ at your own cost such labour on your farm as shall bring it into as good condition as when you took it. You shall not be asked for rent till you have reaped your next crop; and then you may pay it in kind or in money as you like best. This is the utmost indulgence I can allow you, and it is enough; for, if you manage well, you may easily pay for the necessary labour and make up your rent too."

Murdoch did not know, he said, how he was to hire labour; it was the dearest thing that could be had in Garveloch.—This would have been true a few days before, but it was not the case now. It occurred to Angus that he might so recommend himself to the laird by the management of Murdoch's farm as to obtain employment for himself on advantageous terms the next year. The laird knew a great deal about Angus, and respected his general character very highly, but was not acquainted with his capabilities as a man of business; and the young man rightly believed that if he could testify his skill and industry, he might secure a comfortable settlement under the laird. He offered his services to Murdoch for more moderate wages than would have been asked by any other man within reach, and they were of course gladly accepted.

When the laird had declared his intention of sending for medicine and advice for the two boys, Murdoch's affairs were settled for the present.

Ella next approached to request permission to pay her half-year's dues into the laird's own hands. He smiled, and said she need pay only once a year, and might keep her money till Midsummer; but he frowned when she answered that she had rather deal directly with himself, if he would allow it, and take the opportunity while he was at hand, as the money was ready. He declared his displeasure at all quarrels between his steward and his tenants, and was not slow in laying blame on both parties. His decision, when he heard the whole story, was far from satisfactory to anybody. He secured good treatment to Archie indeed, and full liberty to do as he liked, but Archie's family thought him much too lenient towards Mr. Callum. Callum was still less pleased to find that he had been in the wrong from first to last.

Angus, to prevent a further outbreak of ill-humour, hastened to bring forward his plea. It was of a nature to please the laird. He complained of the absence of intercourse between the islanders and the people on the mainland, and pointed out the evils arising thence to all parties: the deficiency of some articles of production, and the impossibility of disposing of the surplus of others; the disadvantage caused to the islanders, whether they bought or sold, by their ignorance of market prices, and the diffi-

culties in the way of social improvement occasioned by such seclusion. He had strong in his mind other difficulties and other woes which had arisen out of this absence of communication; but as he kept these to himself, they only served to animate his eloquence when speaking of mere matters of business.

"What you say is very true," observed the laird. "You have here more peat than you can use, while in some of the neighbouring islands, the people are half frozen in winter for want of fuel: and Callum tells me that Murdoch's harvest having failed last year, two or three families were obliged to subsist on shell fish for nearly two months, till the men were too weak to work, and several children might have died if Callum had not come his rounds earlier, so as to send for potatoes just in time to save them. He tells me too that the kelp manufacture is mere child's play compared with what it might be made, if a fair market were opened."

"I wish your honour would be pleased to step down to the shore yonder and see what might be made of the kelping," said Ronald.

"I will, presently. But, Angus, why does nobody make the voyage to Oban? Who prevents it?"

Angus supposed that nobody was sufficiently aware of the advantage: the passage, too, was a dangerous one for the island boats, which were, in his humble opinion, quite unfit for such heavy seas, especially if they had cargoes to take.

"Then why not have a proper vessel, Angus? If it went at regular times to and from Oban, and if, moreover, it touched at some of the neighbouring islands so as to discharge their errands likewise, it might surely be made to answer to any one who would undertake the speculation. Why do not you try?"

Angus was strongly disposed to make the attempt, if he could be guaranteed from loss; but it would not do to venture his little capital in the purchase of a boat, unless he were pretty secure that it would not be laid by after a few trips. The laird was willing to enter into the proposed guarantee, so assured was he that the interest of the islanders would induce them to keep up the communication if it was once begun. After some consultation, it was agreed that the new boat should be started the next summer, as soon as Angus should have concluded his engagement with the farmer, and before the fishing and kelping seasons began. It was to make the circuit of the island on a particular day of the week, and to touch wherever custom was likely to be obtained within a reasonable distance. The sale of produce might either be conducted by Angus, or its owners might cross with him and manage their business themselves, as they chose; and the laird engaged that a newspaper should be regularly forwarded to Oban, which should contain the commercial information most useful to its tenants.

"You look very grave, Ella," said the laird,

when this matter was settled. "You are thinking that this new plan will bring neighbours around you and oblige you to pay rent?"

"No doubt it will, your honour; but I am not afraid. Prices must rise before that comes to pass; and if prices rise, I can afford to pay rent."

It was a very different consideration which made Ella look grave. She was thinking of the summer storms that sweep the sound, and of the perils of the boisterous sea which lay between Garveloch and Oban. She fancied what the anxiety would be of pacing the shore or breasting the wind on the heights as midnight came on, to watch long and in vain for her husband's return; or to see his boat pitching or driving on the waves, or half swallowed up by them. She shook off these selfish fears, however, and listened to what the laird was saying to her brothers. He was warning them to make the most of their tenure while they had the whole produce to themselves, and not to be in too great a hurry to sell. It might be an important advantage to them to store their produce till a favourable time for selling; viz. in the interval between a rise of prices and the establishment of a rent upon their ground. He ended by proposing to view Ronald's line of shore.

Ronald pointed out that, as the sea-weed was to be cut only once in three years, and as it had never yet been made use of in this place, he must profit by this first season at the expense of all the labour that could be spared. He and his

brother and sister now gave their chief attention to it, gathering with great care whatever unbruised sea-weed of the right kind was thrown on shore, and cutting diligently at low-water whenever the sea was sufficiently calm to allow of the weed being properly landed when the tide came in. The hair rope, twisted by Ella, was now brought into use. It was laid at low-water beyond the portion cut, the two ends being brought up and fastened on the shore; and when the whole floated at high-water, the ends were drawn in, and all the weed they enclosed was landed at once. Ronald pointed out several inlets where the weed grew plentifully, sheltered from the surge, and remarked on the advantage of a gradual slope of the shore both for cutting and landing the weed, and for drying it when landed. He showed the situation he had chosen for his fire, and the nook in which he meant to stack the weed as it became dry. The laird, having a mind to discover how much the lad knew about his business beyond the mere preparation of the article, asked him a few questions.

"Would it not answer to you, Ronald, to give up some of this large crop to your sister's land for manure?

"If there was no other manure to be had: but there is plenty of weed thrown on shore after a storm, good enough to lay upon land, but too much bruised to serve for kelp. At present, at least, we have enough for both purposes."

"Whenever your crop becomes scanty, will you give over kelping, or let the land lie fallow?"

"We must take care of the land in the first place, I suppose, because we are sure of making something by that; but the price of kelp rises and falls so often, that we can never tell what we shall make by it. Angus says, that if more barilla is brought to London from abroad than usual, we may find any day that a cask may sell for next to nothing."

"But if very little barilla comes from abroad, it may sell very high."

"Yes, sir: but we should not know that till the time came for selling, and it would not do to neglect the land in the meanwhile, so little else as we have to depend on. Ella is welcome to help herself out of my stack, as often as the land wants it; but that is not the case just now."

"How many tons of weed must you have to make a ton of kelp?"

Ronald smiled at the idea of his dealing with so large a quantity as a ton. They that made for the laird, he said, reckoned that twenty-four tons, properly dried, made a ton of kelp; and this might sell for any sum between 7*l.* and 20*l.* according to the state of the market. It was not for him to think of ever making a sum like the lowest of these in one season: but he did think it would be possible, whenever he should have the advantage of knowing how to deal direct with Greenock, to make so much as to be able to improve the moorland on which the pony was now grazing. If he could see that ground turned into a barley field, he thought he should have nothing more to wish.

"Surely," said the laird, "there must be much waste in the burning in such a hole as this;—merely a pit, dug in the sand and lined with stones. It would not be difficult to make a kiln, and Fergus could furnish you with peat, if he has enough to spare to sell, as I am told he has; could not you make a saving in this way?"

"We might in one respect, your honour; but we should lose more in another. As it is, the weed is its own fuel entirely; in the other way we should be at the expense of peat, you see."

"It would have been well if some greater kelp-burners had seen this as clearly as you do, Ronald; and then they would have been saved the expense of building kilns which they cannot afford to use. But one great evil is got rid of by the use of kilns."

"Your honour means the smell: but a little care may prevent that being a great evil to any but those who tend the fire, and they get used to it.—When we lived northwards, we always had three places at least where we might burn, according as the wind was; and if it so happened that the smoke would blow towards the cottage, Ella used to take Archie, and sometimes my father, to a place in the rocks where they might sleep in their plaids."

"And no great evil," said Ella, "in summer nights when the red twilight gleamed on the peaks till midnight. I shall do it again when the wind is perverse, and the kelping must go on. The worst of it is that Archie loves sleep no better than I on such nights.'

"Is he frightened at being away from home?"

"O, no: but he watches the fires till they smoulder. If it is calm for a few minutes, so that the tall flame can shoot up from among the smoke, you might think you saw that very flame in his eyes."

"He is ever on the watch for such fires," said Fergus. "It was but lately that he pointed to the northern lights one clear evening, and told me that kelping time was come again over the sea."

"Why do you not carry him somewhere out of sight of the fires?" asked the laird. "Does he know the purpose of the removal too well to be satisfied?"

"He does, your honour: and, more than that, he must not be crossed in his love of what is beautiful to the eyes that God gave him. God has given him pleasures of his own, and he shall never be stinted in them by me."

Ella would not have spoken of Archie if Mr. Callum had been present. Finding himself not wanted on the shore, he had gone up to the farm to inspect the condition of the family; and now returned to say that the boys were so ill of the fever, that he strongly advised the laird not to enter their dwelling. Ella had, therefore, the honour of entertaining her landlord, which she did as courteously as any mistress of castle and park could have done. She formally invited Mr. Callum also, but he abruptly excused himself, and hastened away.

Archie was still asleep when they returned to

the cottage. As the laird stood over him, and observed his flushed face, he offered that the doctor, whom he should immediately send, should examine Archie before he proceeded to the farm; but this Ella declined.

"He wants rest and soothing," said she, "and that no strange face should cross him till he has forgotten the last night. There is nothing that gives ease so well as sleep like his; and there are none that can soothe him like myself, if I may say so; and no man shall so much as stroke his head these many days."

In her heart she added, "Unless it be Angus."

The laird had no opportunity of showing that he took her hint, for the time arrived for his departure before Archie awoke.

Chapter VIII.

SECLUSION NOT PEACE.

Murdoch's day of adversity—a day long anticipated by his landlord—was come at last. The fever ran through the family; one of the boys died, and Murdoch himself and his daughter Meg had the greatest difficulty in struggling through. No use had been made of years of tolerable health and prosperity, to store up any resources against a change of times. Murdoch had neither money, food, nor clothes laid by; the most he ever aimed at was to reproduce his capital; if he did more, the surplus was imme-

diately spent; if less, no exertion was made to restore the balance, and he therefore grew gradually poorer. He had already let some of his land out of cultivation, and got his rent lowered in consequence, with due warning, however, that, if the estate was let down any further, he must give up his farm to a better tenant. This winter of illness having consumed more of his little capital, he must have given up at once, if it had not been for Angus's care, skill, and industry. The utmost that all those qualities could do, was to keep up the place in its present extent. It was in vain to think of reclaiming what had become wild, of increasing the stock, or of making any new arrangements of land or buildings; and whatever was effected would not have sufficed to pay the rent and recompense Angus, if the establishment of a communication with a market, and a consequent rise of prices, had not been in prospect. Angus built up the fence, manured the ground, and sowed it with the laird's seed, and then spent the months of winter in bringing the place into such repair as might enable him to proceed to further operations upon the soil in spring.

When Murdoch was so far recovered as to go abroad and see what had been done, he quarrelled with everything he beheld. This was partly from the fretfulness of sickness, but much more from jealousy of Angus. He felt, but would not own, a considerable surprise at the extent of the repairs, well knowing that there was no money of his with which to carry them on. He affected to

be angry at the extravagance, saying that he had always wished to see his place in good condition, but had never thought it right to afford such an outlay; and that they who took upon them to make it might pay the rent. Angus good humouredly explained that one part helped another; the stones of the field to build up the wall, the weeds of the shore to manure the soil, the turf of the bog to cover the cow-shed, and so on.

"And pray, how is all to be paid at last,—the laird, and you, and everybody?"

"Out of the crops, if at all."

"Ye may well say, 'if at all.' The crops never did more than just discharge the rent yet; and here's the funeral, and you, and the doctor, to pay besides."

"Your barley and oats will sell higher at Oban, or in yon islands, than the price you have reckoned it at with Mr. Callum. When you go with me to sell your crops, or let me sell them for you——"

"You shall never do that, Mr. Angus."

"As you please, neighbour. As I was saying, it will come to the same thing, if Mr. Callum, knowing you can get a higher price than formerly, takes less for your rent: I shall, of course, be willing to receive my wages in kind, at the same rate; and I hope you may find yourself clear, neighbour, before the next season begins. One ought not to expect more—"

Murdoch laughed bitterly, choosing to suppose that Angus was mocking him. Angus went on,

"Now that you are out of doors again, and

have a prospect of being able to work before long, our business will go on faster and more cheerily, and——"

"Cease your mocking!" cried Murdoch, angrily. "You talk to me of work, and I have no more strength than Rob there, when he creeps out into the sunshine like a field-mouse in March, and slinks back again, at the first breath of wind, like a scarce-fledged sea-fowl."

"I see you are tired, even now," said Angus, offering him his shoulder to lean upon. "You had better sit on the bench, instead of standing to fatigue yourself; but, as I was saying, it is a great thing to have got out at all, and the power to work will come in time, and then all may go as well as ever with your farm."

Murdoch was in no humour to believe this; he tottered without assistance to a seat, and sat watching with many bitter feelings the exertions of Angus, to whom he owed thanks instead of jealousy for the activity of his labour. An idle and unjust suspicion had entered his mind, and never afterwards quitted it.

"He wants to supplant me," he said to himself. "He plies his spade with as much pleasure as if he was setting his foot on my neck at every stroke. He wants to have the rent fall short that he may get the farm himself, and that is why he tries to flatter me that there will be enough to pay every body; that is why he talks so humbly and smoothly about his own wages; that is why his goods are all brought here and stored in Ella's cottage instead of being landed in Lorn,

where all his kin used to live. O aye, he thinks to settle here. But if I cannot keep my farm, that is no reason why he should have it; and Mr. Callum is against him, which is a good thing. I have long meant to give up, and I will do it now, unknown to him, that Callum may let the farm to somebody else over his head. I'll be beforehand with him; and as for what I am to do myself, it will go hard if I cannot get my living by fishing if a woman like Ella can."

This scheme was no whim of the moment. Murdoch had turned it over in his mind as he lay in the fever, irritated by confinement to which he was little accustomed, harassed by grief, and ready to look on the dark side of every thing. While recovering, he had softened towards Angus, and been sorry for the harsh thoughts he had entertained of him; but mortified vanity now recalled his jealousy, and he was ready, for the sake of baffling the suspected designs of a supposed enemy, to take a precipitate step which might ruin his family. He now determined to probe the intentions of Angus, and himself played the traitor in trying to discover treachery which did not exist.

"I wonder how," said he, the next time Angus came within hearing, "I wonder how you would set about the management of this place,—so well as you think of it,—if you were the tenant."

"The first thing I should do," said Angus, looking up into the sky and watching a black speck which was wheeling just beneath the fleecy

clouds, "would be to get at yon eagle that does so much mischief among the fowls. I think the eyrie might be easily found, and should be if you were strong enough to fasten the rope."

Murdoch answered impatiently, supposing that Angus wished to evade his question; "I am not asking you about the fowls, man. I want to know what you would do with the land if you had a long lease of it?"

"I would spend all the capital I have upon it and get more as soon as I could, and improve the powers of the soil to the utmost, for I am sure it would repay me; at least if a market was opened."

"Aye, that would be very well if you had a long lease; but if it was a short one?"

"I should still do the same. I would keep the whole in complete repair, and try to remedy the lightness of the soil; and when I had got one good crop, I would apply the profit to taking in again the land that has been let out of tillage, and——"

"That is, you would do exactly as you are doing now till you could get power to do more."

"Exactly so."

"What a fool he takes me for!" said Murdoch to himself. "He does not trouble himself to use any deceit.—But, Angus, you forget that your rent would be raised presently, and would take away all your profit. You see mine has been lowered since I let yon fields out of tillage."

"And have your profits increased again? Rent follows prices instead of leading them.

Your rent was lowered *in consequence of* your losing, and mine would be raised in consequence of my gaining; so that I should have clear gain at first as you had clear loss."

"Hold your tongue about my losses!" cried Murdoch, in a greater passion than ever.

"I beg your pardon, neighbour," said Angus, "I forgot for the moment that you were not well yet, and I was led on by what you were saying about rent. To put you in heart again, then—when I was standing looking abroad from yonder crag, I thought what a fine thing might be made of this farm, when once a means of conveyance is set up."

"I dare say ye did," muttered Murdoch.

"I saw far off on the north shore, grown men and women as well as children picking up shell-fish, and I thought how glad they would be to barter for oatmeal or barley if a boat touched regularly with supplies. I looked into all the deep dells, and not a patch of tillage did I see over the whole island but here, and Ella's single field. I saw the few lean cattle on the moorland there, and thought that if the pasture was improved as it might be, what a fine thing it would be for us all to be supplied with meat. Then the sea towards Oban looked quite tempting, for it was as blue as in summer, and the islands as fair as they seemed when I was a boy, and every rock so well known to me, above or below the water."

"Well; what has all this to do with my farm?"

"Why, that I longed to be taking my first

trip; going with my vessel heaving slowly over the swell, heavily laden with all our produce, and then coming back dancing over the billows as if it was no more than a skiff, and with little other weight to carry than myself and the winnings in my pocket."

"And you would wish me joy and long life in my farm when you brought me my money, I suppose?"

"To be sure I should: as I do now, and ever have done. Murdoch!" he continued after a pause, "I cannot let you think me such a fool as not to discern that you have some jealousy against me. I have seen enough of the world to know what is meant by such a smile and speech as yours at this moment. Don't let us have any quarrel, for I know you cannot bear it just now; but do keep in mind that I like plain speaking, and would rather know at once when I have offended you."

Murdoch waived him away contemptuously with his staff, calling his wife to come and hear the news that Angus loved plain speaking. She joined in the laugh, and the invalid Meg came creeping forth from the corner of the hearth, braving the open air for the sake of witnessing the quarrel,—a frequent amusement of highland women. Angus meanwhile was wondering what all this could mean, but was little more tempted to be angry with Murdoch in his present state than he would have been with a cross child. Presently it occurred to him that they might be offended at his never having alluded to his pro-

spect of marrying Ella, they being relations of her's though very distant ones.

"You mean, neighbours,"-said he, "that you would have liked me to be more open about my future plans."—Here they exchanged glances.—"But I left them to be told by the one, from whom you had a better title to hear them."

"So he has spoken to Callum already," thought Murdoch, "and has the art to be beforehand with me after all."

"If you had heard all from that one, or by some accident before you learned it from me, you ought not to blame me, for you could hardly expect me to be the first to mention it."

"It would not have been delicate, I warrant, Mr. Angus."

"I think not, considering how the parties stand to each other: but I am sure if I had thought you would have taken offence, I would have told you long ago."

"And pray how long has it all been settled?"

"Since the autumn."

"From the very time you landed?"

"From the very day after."—Looks more fierce than ever.

"And pray how was your proposal received?"

"Nay," cried Angus, now angry in his turn, "you push me too far. I have been meek enough while your questions and your sneers regarded only myself. I shall not satisfy your curiosity further, and I am sorry I have borne so much. You may well laugh at delicacy, for you do not know what it is."

So saying he took a rope with him and went out to war against the eagle, intending to ask Fergus to accompany him with his gun and to remain out the whole day as the best means of avoiding deadly feuds. He left the Murdochs wondering that, after bearing quietly so much reproach and contempt, he should fly off at last through delicacy to Mr. Callum. Never was misunderstanding more complete.

Ella was in the field when Angus appeared on the height. She saw by his step that something had ruffled him, and she hastened towards him to know what had happened. His first words were,—

"Where is Fergus? can he go with me eagle-nesting?"

"How happens it that you have time for sport?" replied Ella. "I thought the season would be too short for your tasks at the farm."

"Our poultry suffers," replied Angus. "We must demolish the eyrie."

"That is not your only reason, I am sure. Tell me what has happened.—The laird says rightly that neighbours who ought to be the more friendly because they are few, are often the first to quarrel; but you would not quarrel, especially with the Murdochs, and less than ever now?"

"I would not willingly. I tried all I could. But, Ella, when did you tell them of our plans?"

"Never," said Ella, colouring; "nor did I mean it till summer."

"Somebody has told, however."

"Impossible; nobody knows it but the two boys; and they might be trusted as if they were dumb."

Angus explained, and both conjectured, and the two lads passed their word that they had never told. There was no catching the little bird that had carried the matter; so the two sportsmen set out in chase of the great bird which was their further aim.

"O, Angus," said Ella; "are ye certain your eye is as steady and your foot as sure as when this was your daily sport?"

"Fear nothing," said Angus, smiling. "I long to be dangling over the surf again, with the sea fowl flapping and screaming about me, and I feeling myself lord, like a lion in a wood of chattering monkeys. You see we take heed to stake and rope, and that done, all is safe. I will bring you home an egg that shall beat all that Archie ever gave you."

"I am glad your sport will be out of his sight, or he would be wanting to imitate you. Do you know, we have had to give him a cask to stow his goods in, as we pack our herrings and the kelp. Ronald has carried it over to the Storr and put it under a ledge where it cannot get wet, and Archie is busy filling it to-day."

"He learns to imitate more and more."

"He does; and so haste away lest he should come and find out what that rope is for. O, be back before the dusk, lest I should doubt your care for Ronald and me."

"I will remember Ronald," said Fergus,

laughing as he shouldered his gun—"I leave the rest to Angus.

Angus found that his favourite sport had lost none of its charms for having been long unpractised. He forgot his wrath when he found himself alone with Fergus in the wild region which the sea-eagles had chosen for their abode. He loved it all the better for having beheld other scenes of sublimity with which he could contrast it. While climbing steep rocky paths, or springing from one point to another where there was no path at all, while looking round in vain for traces of any but marine vegetation, and casting a glance over an expanse which appeared to have no boundary, he related to Fergus what he had seen in the forests of Canada: how the grass and underwood grow tangled and high, so as to make it difficult to proceed a step; how the trees prevent any thing being seen beyond the stems around; and how, by climbing the highest, no other view can be obtained than closewoven treetops spreading, apparently so firm that you might walk over them, as far as the horizon.

"Hist!" said Fergus. "There he sits! his mate is just below on the nest, no doubt. Shall I fire, or wait till he soars?"

"Wait!" said Angus; and he paused to watch the majestic bird, perched on the extreme edge of a jutting crag, and apparently looking abroad for prey. He was motionless, his dusky wings being folded, his black shining talons clasping the verge of the rock, and his large brilliant eye seeming fixed on some object too remote to be

distinguishable by human sight. Fergus was going to speak again, but his companion stopped him, only allowing him to intimate by describing a hook, bending his fingers and shuddering, how he pitied the prey that was even now fated to perish under such a beak and talons. Surprised that they were unperceived, and wishing to remain so, Angus pulled his companion back under the brow of the crag to await the departure of the monarch of this solitude. Presently they heard a rushing sound,—whether from a blast among the crags or from the flight of the eagle, they did not for a moment know; but they immediately saw him soaring high and abroad with that peculiar mode of flight which shows that the eagle is not winging his way homewards, but that there is prey beneath. His cry was distinctly heard, even when he was scarcely visible, and it was answered by one so near them that they both started.

"Now, now," said Angus, "while he is afar, up, Fergus, and fix the stake! Is your gun loaded? You must shoot her as she hovers, while I take the egg."

"Wait one moment," cried Fergus. "He will drop this instant. There, there! see him pounce! He drops plump as if he was made of lead. It is but an instant since he was almost too high and the surge too low to be heard, and now he is like a speck among the foam below."

With all speed, the stake was made fast, the rope secured at one end to this support, and at the other round Angus's waist. When the knots

had been tried and found to be firm, the sportsmen raised a shrill cry to alarm the mate, and the one prepared to take aim and the other to descend as soon as she should rise. In the midst of the din she rushed forth, was immediately struck beneath the wing, and fell fluttering, tumbling, and screaming, from one point to another of the rocks, mingling her dying cry with the distant echoes of the shot. Angus was by this time scrambling to find the nest, sometimes dangling at the end of the rope and buffeted by the sudden gales as they passed, sometimes finding a step for the foot and a hold for the hand, and a resting place where he could pause for an instant. When he discovered the nest, his heart almost smote him for thus taking by storm the palace of the king of the birds; till the sight of scattered feathers and of a few bones reconciled him to the destruction of the formidable enemies of the farm-yard. The large egg was yet warm. Angus put it in his pouch, sent the stray feathers down the wind, cleared out the hole completely, so as to leave no temptation to the enemy to return, and then ascended.

"You have been quick," observed Fergus, "yet there he is, just below yon cloud, and with a prey in his talons."

"One can make more speed with an eagle's nest than with a gannet's," replied Angus. "One is not dizzied with the flapping of more wings than one can count, or stunned with the din of more cries than one's brain will easily bear. Yonder bird is truly the monarch of the

wild now. I could pity him, but for the thought of our fowls."

"If I were he," said Fergus, "I would finish my lonely meal, and away to find another mate."

"So would not I," said Angus; "as long as my dead mate lay below, I would sit all day and watch; and when the tides sweep her bones away, I would build again in the same nook for her sake."

"But do not you mean to carry her home?" asked Fergus. "She lies within reach from the shore. Let us go back that way."

"With all my heart, and as we have time, we may as well make a circuit by the bog, and send a shot each among the wild fowl. Perhaps Murdoch may thank me for bringing such game when he has forgotten my offences."

"If he does not thank you," said Fergus, "I know somebody else who will."

The bird they had shot was in the agonies of death when they arrived where she lay. Her claws were rigid, a film was over her piercing eye; a faint gasping through the open beak, and a feeble fluttering of the extended wings as she lay on her back, were the only signs of life. Angus put her out of pain, slung her over his shoulder, and proceeded to his sport where sport never fails,—among the pools where wild-fowl collect.

No alarm was excited by their appearance on the margin of the reedy pool where the fowl were diving, splashing, sailing or brooding, as suited their

several inclinations. They seemed as tame as farm-yard ducks and geese, and were, indeed little more accustomed to the report of a gun than they: for Fergus had seldom time for sport, and no one in Garveloch but himself and his brother ever fired a shot. He now offered his gun to Angus.

"You disdain such game after having brought down an eagle," said Angus, laughing. "All in their turns say I; so now for it." And another moment made prodigious havoc and bustle among the fowl. As the smoke was wafted from over the pool and slowly dispersed, what a flitting and skimming and huddling together was there on the surface and in the inlets; what a clattering and cackling of the living, what a feeble cry from the dying, while the dead floated in the eddy made by their terrified companions!

"Two, four, five at the first shot! Well done, Angus! If the bird-king be still watching us, what murderous wretches he will think us!"

"He will revenge his species, perhaps, when the darkness, that is a thick curtain to us, is only a transparent veil to him. He can carry off a kid or a fowl at midnight as well as when he has been staring at the sun. But I hope he will go and seek society, for we have no more prey to spare him. Come, take your aim, and then let us be gone, for the shadows are settling down in the hollows, and we have a difficult way to make homewards."

Ella was watching for them; not that they

were late, but she had new perplexities to relate. She had been up to the farm to try to re-establish a good understanding; for which purpose she made a greater effort and was more ready with concessions than she would have been if the family had been well and prosperous. On explaining to them the reasons why she had not communicated her intended connexion with Angus, she was surprised, and scarcely knew whether or not to be vexed, to find that they had no suspicion of the matter. The interview threw no light whatever on the cause of offence; and Ella came away understanding nothing more than that they seemed to think themselves injured, and had refused to let Angus set foot on their premises again till they should have seen Mr. Callum.

The affair was, of course, more mysterious than ever to Angus, who, however, was less troubled at it than his betrothed.

"I will work for you and Ronald instead, till Mr. Callum comes, or till my boat is ready for her first trip. You will neither of you pay me with abuse, and turn me out as if I had robbed you."

"We shall not be made fretful by illness, I trust."

"True; thank you, for putting me in mind of that. I will nourish no anger, and will go at once if they send for me. If they do, I hope it will be while my game is good. I shall be all the better received if I carry a handful of wild

ducks, which invalids like better than smoked geese that eat as tough as theirs. I wish they would learn from you, Ella, how to cure their geese,—and many other things."

Chapter IX.

A FOOL'S ERRAND.

The wild ducks were still fresh when Angus was sent for, as it so happened that Murdoch's wife came within an hour to say that the cattle were in the rye-field, (Murdoch having left the gate open,) and it was beyond the feeble strength of any of the household to drive them out. Angus goodnaturedly refrained from any reference to what had passed, returned, and saw the mischief the farmer's carelessness had done, and made no complaint thereof, but took his seat as usual beside the hearth, and amused the invalids with an account of his day's adventures. The farmer being, for some time after this, as irritable as ever, Angus avoided all mention of their quarrel, the cause of which, therefore, remained as great a mystery as ever. Murdoch saw no mystery in it, so prepossessed was he with the idea that his assistant meant to turn him out and triumph over him; and he founded all his arrangements on this notion. His jealousy was ever on the

watch, and he felt he should have no rest till he could see Mr. Callum, give up his farm on condition that Angus should not have it, and obtain a promise of a cottage where he and his family might live by plying their boat and nets. When Angus returned from the field, one chill, dreary evening, he found Murdoch at the door, looking out for him.

"Where have ye been so late, Angus? It has been nearly dark this hour, and a killing fog."

"I kept to my work to the last minute, neighbour, that's all. I had a particular reason for working hard to-day——"

"Aye, and every day, I think," interrupted Murdoch. "Only remember that this desperate hard work is no desire of mine, and it is not to come into your wages."

"Well, well, but you will not let one speak," replied Angus, smiling. "I was going to say that I have been working for to-day and to-morrow, too, as I shall be on the sea the greater part of the day. Mr. Callum is in Scarba, and as I want to see him, I must be off early in the morning; and if I should not find him directly, I may not be back till night."

"Mr. Callum landed in Scarba! Who told you?"

Angus pointed to the end of his telescope, which peeped out of his bosom. Murdoch peevishly observed, that Angus seemed to see and hear more than anybody in all the range of the islands.

"Very likely, as to the seeing," replied Angus, "for there is not such another glass as this in all the islands, I fancy. I thank my old friend, the surveyor, for it every time I use it,—that is, every day of my life."

"What do you want with Mr. Callum?" asked Murdoch, abruptly.

"What matters it to you?" answered Angus, looking steadily at him. "I take your wages for doing your work, but I am not answerable to you for my private affairs."

"O, certainly; I only asked because I must go with you to-morrow. I want to see Mr. Callum, too."

"Surely," said Angus kindly, "you are not strong enough for the sea yet; and besides, Mr. Callum may not be near the shore, and there may be miles to walk to overtake him. Let me do your business when I do my own."

Murdoch laughed scornfully at this proposal, and yet more, when Angus offered to persuade Mr. Callum to come to Garveloch. The farmer was bent on making the attempt, and was not deterred by the dreary weather of the next morning.

They landed in Scarba before they supposed that Mr. Callum would have left his bed, but found that he intended to embark early from the opposite side of the island, after having slept in the interior, and that if they wished to reach him, they must take horse, and proceed as fast as possible. There was but one horse to be had;

and Murdoch, weary as he already was, would not lose sight of Angus for an instant. He insisted on mounting behind him, and thus they set off. The roughness of the roads, and of the horse's pace, irritated Murdoch, as every untoward circumstance, however trifling, was apt to do at present. From being sullen, he became rude, surly, and passionate, till Angus began to consider what mode of treatment would bring his companion to his senses.

"Take heed how you ride, I say, Angus. If you can bear jogging to pieces, I can't."

"The road is terribly rough indeed, neighbour; but we shall find an even reach when we have turned yon point."

"Even! do you call this even?" cried Murdoch at the end of a quarter of an hour, when they began to descend a steep.

"I did not answer for more than the reach we have passed, neighbour; and, what is more, neither that nor this was of my making."

"But it was of your choosing; and never tell me that there is no better road than this across Scarba. You chose it to revenge yourself on me because you could not make me stay behind."

"You're mistaken, neighbour."

"Mistaken! I mistaken! Stop the horse, Angus; stop him this minute! I won't ride another step with you."

"Do you mean that you wish to be set down?" asked Angus, who thought he now saw a way to tame his companion. "Do you wish to get off here?"

"To be sure—this moment, this very moment. I won't ride another step with you."

Angus let him get down, and proceeded leisurely. In two minutes, he heard Murdoch calling him as he had expected.

"Let me get up again," said he in an altered tone; and he began to mutter something about the way being far for walking, and then held his peace till they overtook Mr. Callum.

This important personage frowned on Angus, and cut short his conference with him as much as he decently could. He smiled on Murdoch when he heard the nature of his business, and favoured him with an audience of unusual length. He could not say, in answer to Murdoch's suspicions, that Angus had ever asked for the farm; but they agreed that he certainly meant to do it, and that it would be a great triumph to disappoint him. Mr. Callum had a distant cousin who was in want of just such a farm as Murdoch's, and he had no doubt he could influence the laird to let it be thus disposed of, and to build a dwelling for the Murdochs where they might pursue their fishing. If so the workmen should begin to build without delay, and it should be seen whether Murdoch's fishing might not begin as soon as Angus's traffic with his new boat, which was the talk of all Garveloch and the neighbouring isles.—Mr. Callum would not give Angus the pleasure of hearing this, or the progress which was making in the building of the little packet; but he described to Murdoch all its conveniences and beauties, and told him how the

laird himself made frequent inquiries about it, and had been more than once to see it on the stocks.

The two plotters having by mutual sympathy put themselves in mutual good humour, were full of consideration for each other, and pointedly neglectful of everybody else, when they returned from their long conference. Callum ordered refreshment for Murdoch, and recommended rest without consulting the convenience of Angus; and the farmer strove to contrast his own deference to the great man's wishes with Angus's independence of manner and speech. Both moralized on the beauty of sincerity and the foulness of treachery, till the supposed plotter but real plottee yawned without ceremony. They had rather he should have blushed or trembled; but his yawns furnished a new topic to Murdoch on his way home. In every respite from a hard trot on land and rolling on sea, he discoursed on audacity as an aggravation of malice, till, having reached his own door, he underwent a fainting-fit with a heroism worthy of a better cause.

Chapter X.

WHAT IS TO HAPPEN NEXT?

No contrast would be more complete or more refreshing to Angus than the state of affairs below to that which he was constantly witnessing

at the farm. With Ella and her brothers everything prospered; and their external prosperity was not alloyed by troubles from within. The boys used in former days to think there was no fault in Ella, and would have been highly offended if any one had spoken of a time when they would love her better, and be happier with her. That time had, however, come. They were grateful to her for the new virtue to which time gave rise,—the virtue of remembering that they were no longer children, and of surrendering her authority accordingly, by natural degrees, and before the change was demanded or even wished for. She waited to be consulted about their little plans, asked their advice about her own, and, still better, not only smiled indulgently upon their mirth as formerly, but took part in it as if years were rolling backward over her head. On her part, she felt that her brothers were her friends because they loved Angus devotedly; and, as for Angus, all was, of course, right in his eyes in a household whose chief bond was attachment to himself and devotion to the interests which were most dear to him. He passed every half hour that he could spare from his duties at the farm among his friends below, now pointing out what ought to be done in the field, now helping Ronald to strew and dry and stack his weed, now cutting peat with Fergus, now singing songs or climbing rocks with Archie, but oftenest talking with Ella in the cottage. He never could carry his point of rowing her out to fish. She always declared that it would keep him absent

from the farm too long, and that she had had experience enough in managing her nets to perform all the labour of that kind that would be necessary till the herrings came again. She could not, however, prevent his following her with his eyes. He now prized his excellent glass more than ever, and twenty times in a morning he would fix it in the direction of her boat, and watch and admire her proceedings. How delicately and securely she kept clear of every sunken rock, how steadily she plied her oars against wind and tide, how courteously she answered a salute from a passing skiff, how firmly she stood on the thwarts to throw her nets, how powerfully she drew them in, how evidently she enjoyed setting her bark with its head to the wind, and making every sudden gust serve her purpose and help to bring her home! All this Angus saw; and seeing it, pronounced that there was no more fitting occupation for such a woman as Ella than fishing; but then, there were few such women—and he smiled at the thought. He had seen young ladies angling in a trout stream; and this was pretty sport enough; but here was an employment requiring strength, presence of mind, dexterity, and patience: it was therefore a fitting employment for such an one as Ella, and none but such as Ella could pursue it with success.

That success was great and well nusbanded. Ella remembered that this was, perhaps, the only year that she might appropriate the whole produce, and she therefore stored what she could as

capital to improve the quantity and quality of her produce when she should hold her croft on lease. She hoped to have money to lay out in improving the soil, and not only to keep her nets and casks and boat in repair, but to purchase a better boat and various conveniences for procuring and salting a larger quantity of fish. She wished her brothers to do the same; and, to set them going, made certain purchases of each. She paid Fergus for whatever fuel was wanted for her own purposes, over and above that which was used for the common convenience of the household. She bought weed to manure her field from Ronald, and was pleased to find that he applied his little fund in taking in the lot of moorland which he always looked forward to rendering productive. She went every day to see what was done, and often listened to Angus's prophesy that it might be made a very serviceable field in time, and would probably yield enough the next season to prove that it was worth the tillage.

Thus were affairs proceeding when Angus appeared with a face of surprise, one fine spring evening, and asked who could be coming to settle in the next cove, round the point. As they did not know what he meant, he proceeded to explain that a dwelling was being built just above the beach. Ronald had not been visiting his shore for some days, and knew neither of the arrival of workmen with their rude materials, nor of any business of the kind going forward in the neighbourhood. Nothing could be learned from the workmen, more choice in respect of in-

dolence and awkwardness than even the Highland workmen in general. All they could tell was that they came by Mr. Callum's orders, that they were to build a house with two rooms of certain dimensions, and to get the work finished as fast as possible for the purpose of being entered by the tenant at Midsummer. Murdoch only smiled when Angus told the fact on his return, and said that they must ask Mr. Callum what the new house was for.

"Suppose," he continued, "your packet-boat, that you reckon such an advantage, should have tempted somebody to come and fish in rivalship of Ella! What would you say then?"

"What I have said before,—the more the better, while there is produce and a market. A market once opened, there is room for many; and then there are all the advantages of neighbourhood and traffic, while there are still enough for everybody, and will be for a long time to come. Ella will be very happy to pay rent, if at the same time she can sell her produce to better advantage, and buy what she wants cheaper, and with more ease, and have good neighbours around her."

"We shall see all about it when Mr. Callum comes," was Murdoch's reply.

"Yes, everything is to be done when Mr. Callum comes," said Angus, smiling. "This new house is to be occupied, and Ella and the boys are to have a lease, and——"

"And you, Angus?——"

"And I am to take my first trip in my packet-

boat, and——" Here he smiled again, for he was thinking of another event which was to be connected with this first trip; but Murdoch, as usual, misunderstood him, and took this for a smile of malice. "And I," continued Angus, "am to be paid my dues, neighbour, I hope."

"That you shall be, I promise you," answered Murdoch, to whom the smile of malice properly belonged.

It was observed that the Murdochs took great interest in the progress of this new dwelling. They were now all as able to work as they had ever been, the spring weather having restored their strength; but their invalid habits accorded too well with the taste of the family to be readily given up. The father still muffled himself in his plaid, and sat with folded arms on a large stone on the beach, looking with half-shut eyes at the builders, and leaving Angus to work his own pleasure at the farm. Murdoch's wife still complained as much of her fatigues and cares as if the cribs were yet occupied by patients in the fever. Rob still kept his fingers in his mouth and lay in the sun, when the sun shone, or before the fire when the day was foggy. Meg and her sister still disregarded their mother's troubles, and whenever they could make their escape, ran down to play pranks with the workmen, and to do mischief to their work as soon as they turned their backs. All were clamorous alike when anything went wrong,—which happened every day, —and blame was divided between the two who alone kept matters going at all,—the farmer's

wife and the farmer's man. If the poultry were missing, the cattle trampling the corn, the pig oversetting the milk-pails, the eggs broken among the oatmeal, the farming utensils injured or not to be found, there was a contention who should rail the loudest at mother or Angus; and the only means of restoring quiet was to turn out the young folks into the yard. Their father alone was strong enough both in limb and will to do this—their mother not having bodily strength, nor Angus inclination for a scuffle. Even this extreme measure only removed the evil one degree, for the boy and girls, having pushed in vain at the door, and thrown everything within reach at the window, (which, being unglazed, received little injury,) ran down to plague the builders below, as they had plagued the authorities above. Murdoch often swore that it was time to give up farming, for it was a kind of life to kill a peaceable man like him, and then he appealed to Angus whether he did not say truth; and when Angus could not agree with him, the usual reply of the bitter laugh was sure to come.

At length, just before Midsummer-day, news arrived that Angus's boat was on its way, and that he might go in two days and meet her off the coast below Scarba, and bring her home to her destination himself. Mr. Callum sent word at the same time that he should land in Garveloch the next day from Oban, and expected that every one would be ready to transact business so as to occasion no delay. Nobody wished

for delay. Murdoch fancied that he should find ease and domestic peace in a change of employment, and had already thrown his pride behind him. Angus believed himself within three days of the marriage on which all his hopes had been built for many years. Ella contented herself with saying that her rent was ready; and the lads were eager to be in possession of the lease which should secure to their sister and themselves the fruits of their industry.

Chapter XI.

UNDERSTAND BEFORE YOU COMPLAIN.

"Angus!" said Murdoch, the next morning, "look through your glass, and tell me if you see Mr. Callum's boat yet. The day is none of the clearest, but there is a gleam passing over the Sound at this moment."

The mountains were wholly hidden and a dark grey cloud hung round the horizon; but, after a little patient watching, Angus saw a boat emerging from the mist, and observed that a sail was hoisted and began to swell with the breeze which was chasing the fogs.

"I have not seen such a bark since the laird left us," observed Angus; "and she is full of people and heavily laden. There is company

coming, unless Mr. Callum is bringing over the tenants of the new house down below."

"That can hardly be, Angus; for the tenant of that house stands at your elbow."

"Well, you can keep a secret, I must own," said Angus, laughing. "However, I am truly glad, neighbour, that you think so much better of your affairs than you did as to venture on following two occupations."

When Murdoch explained that he was going to quit the farm this very day, and should have no further interest in it after receiving an equivalent for his growing crops, he was surprised to see how pleased Angus looked, and asked the reason.

"You know how much I wish for more neighbours," was the reply, "and for improved tillage and increased traffic, and you cannot therefore wonder that I am glad to find that the soil is likely to be taken care of now that I have done my best for it."

"But are you not vexed to give it up, Angus? Would not you like to have kept it yourself?"

"I!" said Angus. "I have something else to do. My packet and Ella's farm will be as much as I can manage."

"Well, I always thought you wished to keep the management of these fields!"

"I wonder at that. Our engagement terminates to-day, you know. Was not that made clear from the beginning, neighbour?"

"O yes." Murdoch had no more to say. So Angus proceeded to Ella's dwelling, where he

had promised to be present when the lease was talked over.

Mr. Callum appeared immediately after landing, leaving the new tenants and the Murdochs to settle themselves each in their dwelling,—a proceeding which took very little time where there was but a small stock of furniture, and where nobody dreamed of cleaning an empty house before it was again occupied.

Mr. Callum explained that blanks were left in the lease, which were to be filled up when the parties should have agreed upon the yearly rent to be paid. It was necessary that he should survey the place afresh, and that they should know that they no longer had the fishery to themselves. Ella was prepared for this; but not so Ronald, for finding that by tilling his piece of moorland he had created a rent on his sister's field. It was in vain that he wished he had let it alone at present, that he remonstrated, that he grew angry: Mr. Callum was right, and kept his temper, and was moreover supported by Angus and Ella against the opposition of the two lads.

"But Ella had nothing to do with it," argued Ronald. "It comes into my share, and it is very hard that she should have to pay for what I have taken it into my head to do."

"This is no concern of the laird's or mine," replied Callum. "We let the whole to your sister, and all we have to do is to ascertain the difference in the productiveness of different parts, and to charge according to the average."

"Besides," observed Angus, "the case would

have stood the same if Murdoch or any body else had tilled the moor. Rent is not an arbitrary demand of the landlord, but a necessary consequence of the varying qualities of the soil."

Callum grew very civil towards Angus at once.

"You have seen much of the world, Mr. Angus; and I dare say you have found discontent wherever you went upon this subject of rent. The farmers will have it that the landlord lowers their profits."

"And the people," observed Angus, "that rent is an arbitrary tax imposed on the consumer: each of which notions is as mistaken as the other."

"I cannot say," observed Ella, "that it is the laird that lessens my profits. He asked for no rent while my field was the lowest soil tilled; and he never would have asked it, if a worse land had not been taken into cultivation. It is therefore the different degree of fertility which causes rent, and not the will of the landlord."

"And when the people complain," said Angus, "that rent is paid by the consumer as an arbitrary tax, they forget or do not know that rent is the consequence and not the cause of high price. Your barley bannocks and Murdoch's look pretty much alike on the table, and would sell for the same price; but yours are produced at near double the cost of his, and therefore Murdoch pays the laird a part of the profits of his."

"And very fair," observed Callum; "and so it will be with your fish in a little while, Mrs. Ella. Murdoch will sell fish which look like yours, and

at the same price: but it will have cost him more time and labour to get them, and therefore the laird calls on you for a part of the profits which you have till now kept to yourself, and would have kept still if the fish had not brought a good enough price to tempt Murdoch to try his luck."

Angus hoped that rent would go on to rise, being, as it is, a symptom of prosperity. Ronald wondered he could say so; for his part, he wished there was no such thing as rent.

Angus explained that as rent rises in consequence of a rise of prices, and a rise of prices shows that the article is in request, and that there are purchasers able to buy it, a rise of rent is a symptom of wealth, though many people err in supposing it a cause.

Mr. Callum observed that many wished for an abolition of rent, because they thought high prices an evil in every case.

"Well," said Fergus, "surely everybody had rather pay little than much for a peck of oatmeal."

"That depends on what causes the prices to be low or high," replied Callum. "If I take upon myself to forbid anybody in these islands to buy oatmeal in Lorn when they have not enough at home, or if a bad season should make a scarcity, and prices should rise in consequence, such a rise of prices would be an evil, because the people would not have any more wealth to give in exchange than if the meal was plentiful. But if (which is a very different case) farmers find that their customers have money enough to buy

more and more oatmeal, and make it worth the farmers' while to take poorer and poorer soils into cultivation, the consequent rise of price is no evil. It not only shows that wealth is increasing, but also helps to increase it;—it causes oats to grow where only heather grew before."

"But after all," said Ronald, "the landlord gets all the benefit of the change. He grows richer and richer, the more prices rise."

"Not so," replied Angus. "Do not you remember my telling you that there is a perpetual tendency to render the productiveness of land more equal by improvements in the art of cultivation? and rent depends not on the quantity produced, but on the inequality in the productiveness of soils. An estate which once yielded one-third of its produce to the landlord may afterwards yield him only one-fourth, and then again one-fifth, though he may receive a larger amount of rent each time."

"This has actually been the case," said Callum; "and therefore it is a mistake to say that the landlord has all the advantage of a rise of prices."

"I should like to know," said Fergus, "what would happen if landlords had no rent, and so bread became cheaper."

"If landowners gave away their land! Very reasonable truly!" exclaimed Callum.

"I rather think," said Angus, "that the first consequence would be that there would soon be no landlords. All land would be in the possession of those who would cultivate it themselves,

and then, in consequence of a fall of prices, inferior lands would be let out of tillage, there would be less food raised, and things would go back to the state they were in centuries ago."

"But if not," persisted Fergus,—"if they did not sell their land, but lent it without receiving any pay, bread would be cheaper surely, and that would be a good thing."

"Far from it," replied Angus. "The next thing would be that we should have a famine."

"A famine from bread being cheaper!"

"Yes; for you must remember that we could not make the ground yield in a hurry any quantity of grain we might happen to want. We have already seen that land would not produce more for rent being abolished, and we shall soon see that it would produce less; and if less was produced while the price was so lowered as to tempt people to consume more, a famine would soon overtake us."

"If," said Ella, "we have no more oatmeal in the islands than will last till next harvest at the present price, and if people are tempted to use more by the price being lowered, do not you see that the supply will fall short before harvest? And then again, the lowering of the price will have made it no longer worth while to till much that is tilled now, and there will be still less produced next year."

"In order to keep up the same extent of tillage," said Angus, "how high must the price rise again?"

"To what it is now, to be sure," replied

Ronald. "I see what you mean :—that we must come round to rent-price again, even if the landlords did not take rent. So, Mr. Callum, I beg your pardon for being angry about Ella's field; and I will say no more against rent being paid for it, or for my line of shore, or for whatever will bear proper rent."

"Your sister has made you a sensible lad," was Mr. Callum's reply, "and that is more than I can say for most lads I meet in the islands. They grumble at me, and tell all strangers about the hardship of paying high rents, and the shame that rich men should empty the pockets of the poor."

"And what do strangers say?" inquired Ella.

"They look with contempt upon the tumble-down dirty huts in which the people live, and ask what rent; and when they hear, they hold up their hands and cry out upon the laird."

"Not distinguishing, I suppose, between the real and nominal rent."

"Just so. They do not inquire how much is for the fishery, and how much for the land, and how much for the kelping-shore, and how very little for the house; but they run away with the idea that the total rent is for the roof and four walls, and tell their friends at home how hard the Highland proprietors are upon their tenantry."

"But is it not possible to make the people understand the true state of the case?"

Callum said he had never tried, for they were a stupid, unmanageable set that he had under him,

and only fit to do the laird's pleasure whatever it might be. He began, however, to think that it would make matters very easy to have the tenantry enlightened upon the subject of rent: and when an amicable agreement was presently concluded about the lease, and the blanks filled up without dispute, he said to himself that it was pleasant to have to do with reasonable people where business was in question, while their independence on other occasions was not perhaps more troublesome than the ill behaviour of the ignorant.

Ella, being quite of this opinion, was anxious to know something of the character of their new neighbours at the farm. As Mr. Callum said little about them, and she did not choose to inquire, she must leave it to time to satisfy her curiosity; but she augured well from Mr. Callum's expectation that they would find their rent no hardship, though it was considerably higher than Murdoch had lately paid. The furniture, too, of which she obtained a sight as it was being carried up, was of a superior kind to what was often seen in Garveloch, and nearly equal to her own; so that there was hope that the family were sober and industrious at any rate, and that other virtues would show themselves as opportunity offered.

Chapter XII.

A WAKING DREAM.

Not a drawback to the happiness of Angus and Ella now remained, and a more cheerful family party was never seen than assembled before the cottage the next morning to arrange the few preparations necessary before the marriage, which was to take place in two days.

Angus had finally given up his charge at the farm, and received security for the payment of what was due to him out of the growing crops which had been sown and tended by him. He was now about to make the circuit of the island, and to touch at some others in the Sound, to make known the time when he should take his first trip, in order that the commissions of his customers might be ready. Ronald was his companion in this excursion, from which they hoped to return by the middle of the next day, before proceeding to meet the new boat. Fergus would accompany them then to share the honour of bringing home the vessel which was to be the first regular medium of the commerce of the island; and the next morning, Ella and Archie were to be received on board and to proceed to Oban, where the marriage was to take place.

Fergus and Ella were to occupy themselves during Angus's present excursion in improving their arrangements within doors. Angus's goods

had been stored in a safe place; they were now unpacked, and served not a little to ornament the dwelling and add to its conveniences. With what a light heart did Ella pursue her employments this day! How gentle was now her accustomed song, and how tender the glance she cast upon Archie, from time to time, as he followed her to watch her proceedings and make his strange remarks upon every new object he saw! Fergus waited upon them both with all the quiet heedfulness of a girl, while his manly spirit was eager to be busy upon the tossing sea.

"Ella! What can this be?" he cried, as he unpacked a bag of green baize which contained some short tubes which seemed meant to fix into each other.—Archie immediately snatched one and looked through the ends.

"He takes it for a telescope," said Ella, smiling. "It is a flute; Angus told me he would play to us, some day. It is played by blowing through those holes, I believe, and not at the end, like the mouth-piece of a bag-pipe."

Fergus tried, and succeeded in producing a tremendous screech. Archie first started, then laughed, and employed himself for the rest of the day in applying a piece of alder wood to his mouth and screeching in like manner.

"His music is as good as mine," observed Fergus laughing. "I cannot think how any body can fetch pleasant music out of those holes. I like a bag-pipe far better."

"Wait till you hear Angus play to-morrow," said his sister. "He tells me that he has heard

some musicians play airs that would almost win the eagle from her prey."

"I wish he were such a one," replied Fergus. "I would fain have an eagle within reach, and pin her carcase to our wall as Angus has done at the farm."

"You would be a keen sportsman, Fergus, if you lived within reach of better game than wild-fowl that lie still to be shot. But, come, lay aside the flute, and leave off handling your gun, if you wish to be on the steep to hail their return to-morrow. There is much to be done yet, and I have a fancy that they will be home earlier than the hour they bade us look for them."

The boat was in earlier; but Fergus was already watching on the steep, with Ella sitting by his side.

"All well?" cried Angus, as he sprang on shore; "why then, everything is well, for we shall have as much business to manage in this first trip as if our boat was bound for the port of London, instead of such a poor place as Oban."

"A poor place!" exclaimed Ronald. "Well, I suppose travelling abroad makes one saucy. I never saw Oban, to be sure; but I should judge from the number of things you are to be desired to buy, that almost any traffic may be carried on there. Can ye tell Ella some of the articles you will have to bring back?"

"There are more than I can remember now. One neighbour is going to try his fortune with a flock, and I am to bring over some ewes with

their lambs. Then a rare housewife wants needles, and her husband hemp to make nets; and many need barley-meal to make out till harvest. I am glad you are going with me, Ella, for I am to have a commision for some woman's finery that I know less how to bargain for than for sheep and hemp. I shall often have such articles in my freight, for shall women be within reach of caps and ribbons and not buy?"

"You may reckon on beginning with me," said Ella, smiling. "I purpose trafficking for caps."

There was more in this to delight Angus than would have met an English ear. The Highland women wear no caps till they can assume the matronly curch with which it was now Ella's purpose to provide herself. She led the way into the dwelling to show how she and Fergus had been employed.

"You have been as busy as we, Ella; so now let us make holiday for the two hours that we are waiting for the tide. It is full soon to start again: but the better we use the tide, the sooner we shall come back for you and Archie. Where is Archie?"

"On the Storr since day-break. Would ye let him hear the flute?—that is, if ye can make it heard so far, for we shall not win him home while day lasts."

Angus went out upon the beach, and his companions seated themselves round him upon the shingle; and now, how astonished was Fergus to hear what music might be brought out of a

flute! Its clear sweet notes reached Archie on his rock. He came out to the mouth of his hole at the first sound, and stood intently listening while Angus played a slow air, and danced merrily when it was changed to a jig. As often as it ceased, he clapped his hands impatiently for more.

"O Angus," cried Ella, "ye have brought a new pleasure to Archie!" and Angus took this as it was meant,—as a strong expression of gratitude.

"How piercing the note is!" cried Ronald. "If you played among the dells higher up, the rocks would be long in letting the music drop."

"And if this sea were smooth water like an inland lake," said Angus, "I could make the people in Scarba hear me. I have heard it as far over water where there was no ripple and when not a breath was stirring."

The lads had seldom known so serene a state of the air as this, and could not even conceive of waters that had not more or less swell.

On looking round, Ella perceived that the musician had other auditors than Archie and themselves. The tenants of the farm were peeping over the ridge behind, and the Murdochs were stationed at the point of the promontory to the left which separated their cove from Ella's. Though Angus put up his instrument, they still lingered, at first hoping to hear it again, and then being curious to see the preparations for embarking.

"Take care of yourself and Archie till the

morn," said Ronald, " and then be up with the sun,—bright may he shine!—and see us out across the Sound; and be sure ye await us at the quay, for that is where ye must get on board."

" It will save us a circuit if we push off from the quay now," said Fergus, " since we have to bear down due south some way, and we can easily carry the boat over the bar."

Angus thought the same. Just as they were hoisting the bark on their shoulders, the young Murdochs came up; Rob to ask a passage a little way down the Sound, and the girls to keep Ella company for a while.

" Archie is in his merriment to-day," said one; " he has scarce ceased dancing since he heard the music."

" He knows what is doing now," observed the other; " see him climbing to the top to see them push off."

The girls and Ella then walked slowly up the path from the beach to a point whence they might watch the boat set off, and trace it for a considerable way. It was a bright and serene afternoon; there were no rough gales abroad, and the swell of the sea was no greater than in the calmest days of that region. The air was so clear that the mountain lights and shadows were distinctly visible as their peaks rose one behind another on the eastern horizon. Within the shadow of the Storr, the water was of the deepest green, while beyond, long streaks of glittering light extended from island to island, and grew broader as the sun descended.

The little boat pushed off from the quay in good style, with two pair of oars, the three boatmen of Ella's household having waved their bonnets and cheered before they stept in, in honour of the spectators. It was necessary to pull strongly and evenly till they should have crossed the rapid current which flowed round the Storr: but Rob, heedless of this, and remembering that he had not cheered and waved his bonnet, suddenly started up, threw down his oar, destroyed the balance, and upset the boat.—What shrieks rang from rock to rock, as the bark tumbled in the current, and the rowers were borne, in spite of their struggles, down, down, far and fast by the sweeping waters! Ella clasped her hands above her head, and uttered no sound after the first shriek. Her companions ran hither and thither with loud lamentations. The people at the farm did what these girls should have done; they ran down with all speed to desire Murdoch to get out his boat.

"There's one safe!" cried Meg; "the rock is but just above the water, but he is sitting upon it."

"O God!" groaned Ella, "save me from praying which it may be!"

Another soon appeared on the same point; but nothing could yet be seen of the other two.

Archie had beheld all this, and more: he could overlook Murdoch's proceedings also from his pinnacle. He was strongly wrought upon; for no one understood better the signs of emotion, whether or not he understood the cause. He

acted with rapidity and strength, as if suddenly inspired by reason; but alas! his energy could only manifest itself in the way of imitation. The moment he saw Murdoch's boat hastily launched, he ran down to his "floating place," as he called it, rolled his cask into the water and got into it. Murdoch alone saw him standing up and waving his bonnet, before he reached the eddy, which could not but be fatal to him.—The cask came up again,—empty—and floated round the point, as Archie had no doubt foreseen it would, and at length arrived within Fergus's reach, and was the means of saving him. He clung to it, not aware of the nature of the friendly support, till taken up by Murdoch's boat. The two who had reached the rock were Angus and Ronald; and Rob had had his wits so sharpened by the plunge, as to perceive that he had better not leave hold of the oar he had clung to at first. He too was taken up; so that Ella believed that all had come safe out of this awful peril,—she alone being ignorant of what had happened at the Storr. When she joined her brothers on the beach, they stood a moment aloof from her embrace, with countenances in which there was as much of solemn compassion as of grief. Angus was down upon his face; Murdoch alone uttered a few broken words. It was some time before she could comprehend or would believe what had happened, and then she was the only one who retained her self-command.

An expression of unspeakable anguish passed

over her countenance as Fergus mourned that he had been saved by Archie's loss.

"Nay, Fergus," said she, "let us leave it to Him who guides us, to show whose life had best be taken and whose left. God knows I strove for this before I knew his pleasure; and now that we do know it, let us question neither the purpose nor the means.—Let us devoutly bless Him that you are here."

While Angus took her home, the neighbours dispersed in search of the body, which could not, however, be found, and was supposed to have been carried by the current far out of reach. When all had gone home for the night, and her companions had for some time retired to hide their grief, or to forget it for a while in sleep, Ella stole out alone, and passed the night among the rocks,—a night, whose natural beauty was worthy to succeed to that of the day that was gone. It was light; and this it was which, giving the faint hope of recovering the body, took Ella abroad. The red lights of the west had not wholly vanished when the grey dawn began to glimmer, while, in mid sky, the stars twinkled as if in rivalship of the sparkles below. The sea was, as it often is in that region, highly luminous; and as Ella sat watching the eddy within which Archie had sunk, her eye marked, and not without pleasure even now, the gleam which broke on the crest of every wave, and was scattered in showers of sparkles as far as the spray could reach.

There she was found by Angus, at day-break.

"You have not been in his cave?" said he,

"No," replied Ella. "I will go there first when you and the lads have left me."

"Left you! and when will that be?"

"In a few hours, I hope," she replied, smiling. "I must see that Archie is still honoured by being kept apart from that in which he had no share. The business of our days went on without him while he lived, and it shall go on now, if it were only to show that he bore no part in it. You must perform your promises to our neighbours, Angus, and discharge their business, and then you can come back to me with an easy mind."

"I will," replied Angus; "and I will not ask you to go with me this time. It is for you to say whether there is cause for your remaining behind."

"There is; this once,—not longer, Angus. I cannot give up the hope of laying Archie beneath the cross beside my father. This will either be done or given up before your next voyage, and then I will go."

For some hours of the morning of their intended marriage-day, Angus and Ella were wandering along the shores engaged in the most melancholy search in which eye and heart can be employed. At length Angus pointed to a sign which could scarcely be misunderstood. He had observed an osprey winging its flight for some distance over the sea, and now perceived that it was joined by another, and that both were hovering as if about to stoop. Endeavouring to scare them with cries, he hastened onwards, followed by Ella, for some distance towards the south-west, and succeeded in finding the object of their

search. Archie lay, as if asleep, on a beach of fine sand, still grasping the bosom of his plaid which contained the gathered treasures of the day.—Long were those weeds and feathers kept as memorials of Archie's pleasures: they were Ella's only hoard.

Angus returned from his first voyage with the lads in safety, and in time to lay Archie's head in the grave. This done, Ella acknowledged that no duty remained to prevent her fulfilling all her promises. She accompanied him, the next week, to Oban, and returned his wife.

Having illustrated the leading principles which regulate the PRODUCTION of Wealth, we proceed to consider the laws of its DISTRIBUTION.

The classes concerned in production are (as we have seen) two, Labourers and Capitalists; but the latter class is usually divided into two, viz.—

Those who hold in possession the natural agents of production, as Land-owners; and

Those who employ these natural agents, as Farmers, or others who apply capital to land or water.

Of these three classes, among whom distribution takes place,

Labourers receive their share as Wages,
Capitalists . . . as Profits,
Land-owners, . . as Rent.

We proceed first to Rent, for reasons which will appear when we treat of Wages and Profits; and, for the sake of clearness, shall confine our Summary to the explanation of Land-Rent.

Summary of Principles illustrated in this Volume.

The total Rent paid by a farmer includes real Rent, and much besides; viz. the profits of the capital laid out by the land-owner upon the estate.

Real RENT is that which is paid to the land-owner for the use of the original, indestructible powers of the soil.

Land has these powers in different degrees.

The most fertile being all appropriated, and more produce wanted, the next best soil is brought into cultivation; then land of the third degree, and so on, till all is tilled that will repay tillage.

An unequal produce being yielded by these different lands, the surplus return of all above the lowest goes to the land-owner in the form of Rent.

The same thing happens when repeated applications of capital are made to the same land for the sake of increasing its productiveness. The produce which remains over the return to the least productive application of capital, goes to the land-owner in the form of Rent.

RENT, therefore, consists of that part of the return made to the more productive portions of

capital, by which it exceeds the return made to the least productive portion.

New lands are not tilled, and capital is not employed for a less return, unless the produce will pay the cost of production.

A rise of prices, therefore, creates, and is not created by, Rent.

When more capital is employed in agriculture, new land is tilled, a further outlay is made on land already tilled; and thus also Rent arises from increase of capital.

When capital is withdrawn from agriculture, inferior, *i. e.* the most expensive soils, are let out of cultivation; and thus Rent falls.

A rise of Rent is, therefore, a symptom, and not a cause, of wealth.

The tendency of Rent is, therefore, to rise for ever in an improving country.—But there are counteracting causes.

Art increases production beyond the usual returns to capital laid out: prices fall in proportion to the abundance of the supply, and Rent declines.

Improved facilities for bringing produce to market, by increasing the supply, cause prices to fall and Rent to decline.

London: Printed by W. Clowes, Stamford-street.

WEAL AND WOE

IN.

GARVELOCH.

Chapter I.

TIMES ARE CHANGED.

About ten years before the period at which our story opens, the laird of Garveloch had transferred his property in that and the neighbouring isles to a large Fishing Company. The terms of the bargain were advantageous to both parties. The laird was to receive, in addition to the annual rent which his island-tenants had been accustomed to pay, and which did not amount to more than sixty guineas a year all together, a sum of several hundred pounds in consideration of the improvements to be effected on the property. As there was little prospect of such improvements being effected, to the extent of some hundreds of pounds, by himself or his poor tenants, the transaction was evidently a profitable one to him; while the Company reasonably expected that the changes they were about to introduce would much more than repay their advance—an expectation which was not disappointed.

Among the numerous fishing stations established by this opulent Company, there was one in Islay. A warehouse was erected, where salt for curing the fish, hemp for making nets, timber for boat-building, staves for cooperage, and all materials necessary for the apparatus of an extensive fishery, were stored. A curing-house, a building-yard, and a cooperage were at hand; a pier, around which there was a perpetual traffic of boats, stretched out into the sea. A little town had risen round these buildings, where but a few years before there had been only a congregation of sea-fowl. Where their discordant cries alone had been heard, there now prevailed a mingling of sounds, not more musical to the ear perhaps, but by far more agreeable to the heart. The calls of the boatmen, the hammer of the cooper, the saw of the boat-builder, the hum from the curing-house, where women and girls were employed in gutting, salting, and packing the herrings, and drying the cod, the shouts and laughter of innumerable children at play among the rocks,—all these together formed such a contrast to the desolation which prevailed ten years before, that the stranger who returned after a long absence scarcely knew the place to be the same.

Nor was the change less remarkable in others of the islands. Rows of dwellings stretched along many a favourable line of beach, and huts peeped out of a cove here and there, where no trace of man had been formerly seen, but an occasional kelping fire. On Garveloch a fishing

village had arisen where the dwelling of Angus and Ella had for some years stood alone. The field which they had cultivated from the year of their marriage till the establishment of the Fishing Company, was now covered with cottages; and a row of huts, most of them with a patch of ground behind, stretched from the bar on the one hand, to the promontory which had been Ronald's on the other. Angus and Ella lived in the old house; but it was so much enlarged and improved as to look like a new one: it was the best in the village; and it was made so for comfort, not for show. There were nine children to be housed; and both their parents knew enough of comfort to see the necessity of providing room and ventilation if they wished to keep their large family in health and good habits. They had worked hard, and on the whole successfully; and though the perpetual calls upon them prevented their laying by much in the form of money, they had been able to provide their dwelling with more convenient furniture, and their children with more decent clothing, than was usually thought necessary in the society of which they formed a part.

Angus's vessel had yielded him all the profit he had expected, and more. Before the Company was established, he had usually had business enough committed to him to make it answer to cross the Sound twice a week; and since the fishing station had been opened in Islay, he had made a double use of the Flora, as his boat was now called. The possession of a decked vessel

had enabled him to share the herring bounty; and he now gave his principal attention to the fishery, only following the coasting trade in spring and autumn,—the intervals of the herring seasons.

As they possessed so great a treasure in this boat, now of the rank of a herring-buss, Angus and Ella thought they could afford to give the old boat to Fergus for a wedding present, and thus enable him to fish for cod on his own account, instead of being a hired fisherman on board one of the Company's vessels. Those who had only open boats were excluded from the herring fishery by the bounty, which was granted to the produce of decked vessels only, and which therefore gave an advantage to such produce in the market which could not be contested; but there was a fair sale for cod, however caught; and now that a market was always open at hand, the possession of a boat seemed to Fergus to afford a prospect of a certain and sufficient maintenance. He married at one-and-twenty, a year after the opening of the station in Islay, and in consequence of it; for he fell in love with a girl who had come with her family to settle at the station as fishers. Janet was young and giddy, and quite willing to leave her father, who was only a hired fisherman, for a husband who had a boat of his own; and, after a short courtship, the young folks settled down in a cottage within a stone's throw of Angus's house. They had made a shift to get on till now, though their family increased every year; and as they had never suffered actual want, they began to think

they never should, and to smile at some of Ronald's wise sayings. Fergus declared that, if one or two seasons of extraordinary plenty would come, so as to enable him to get a new boat, he should have no anxiety remaining. He had been anxious when he had only one child to feed; and he was apt to be anxious at times now that he had five: but if he was but sure of being able to continue his fishing, he would trust that Providence would feed them as they had hitherto been fed. But if these rare seasons should not come, Ronald observed, what was to be done? for the boat was wearing out fast. It must be patched and mended to the last, Fergus replied, and he must still hope for extraordinary profits some happy year. He said nothing, though he probably thought much, of the consequences of a season of failure.

Ronald was free from all cares of this kind, though he had had his share of trouble in other ways. He was a single man and engaged in a good business, and therefore well provided for as to external comfort. He was a cooper at the station in Islay, and as casks were wanted as long as fish were caught, he had reason to suppose himself supplied with employment as long as the establishment should be kept up. He was truly happy to be able to afford assistance to her who had carefully tended his youth, and received Ella's eldest boy with the intention of teaching him his trade. The trouble from which we have mentioned that Ronald suffered arose from disappointment in an attachment he had

formed and long cherished. He had loved a maiden who came in the train of the company, but his friend Cuthbert had won her, and after having made her happy for a few short years, had been taken from her by an accident at sea, leaving her with four children, and no possessions but such as his industry had earned. The widow Cuthbert lived in Garveloch, and supported her little family by net-making. She was respected by all her neighbours, and loved as much as ever by Ronald, who, however, conducted himself towards her as the widow of his friend, rather than as the object of his early and long attachment.

The widow Cuthbert was regarded as the lady of the island, though she was no richer, no better dressed, and, for all her neighbours knew, no better born than any around her. She was better educated; and this was her title to distinction. No one else, except Angus, had seen so much of the world; and even he could not make a better use of what he had learned. There was a sober truth in the judgments she formed of people and of circumstances, which was all the more impressive from the modesty with which she held her opinions, and the gentleness with which she declared them. Those opinions were respected by all, from the highest to the lowest, —from Ella down to Meg Murdoch. Her management of her little family was watched by all who cared for the welfare of their children, and her skill and industry in her occupation were marvelled at by those who did not attempt to imitate her.

It would have amused an attentive observer to see how a distinction of ranks was already growing up in the little society of Garveloch, where none had originally brought wealth enough to authorize such distinction. Next to the widow Cuthbert ranked the farmer and his family—the Duffs, who were looked up to from their great importance as corn-growers to the society. The produce of their fields being much in request, they had enlarged their farm, and improved it to a great extent. By means of the more ample supplies of manure afforded by the curing of so much fish, and through the help of the better implements and modes of tillage which their prosperity enabled them to use, their land produced twice as much as when they had entered upon the farm, fifteen years before. They had every inducement to go on increasing its productiveness; for corn still fell short, and supplies were brought now and then from other islands to make out till harvest. Of late, indeed, the demand had somewhat lessened, as an Irish family had set the example of growing potatoes in their patch of ground, and many of their neighbours had done the same, with the hope of saving the expense of oat and barley meal. Among these were the former tenants of the farm, the Murdochs, who, having failed in all their undertakings, now had recourse to what they supposed an easy and nearly infallible method of getting a living. They had sunk from year to year, and there was little hope of their rising again when they began to place their dependence on potato

tillage. They now filled a station as much below that of Ella and her husband as Ella's had been supposed below theirs on the day of her father's funeral. Murdoch had not parted with any of his pride or jealousy as he parted with his worldly comforts. He still looked with an evil eye on Angus; and, when disposed to vent his complaints or seek counsel, went to new comers in preference to old neighbours. He was particularly intimate with the O'Rorys, who lived in a cottage next to his own, and who were of an age and in circumstances too unlike his own to come into comparison with him in any way.

Dan O'Rory was a lad of twenty, who had brought over his yet younger wife to seek employment in the Garveloch fishery, as there was none to be had at Rathmullin. He had not yet been able to make interest for wages on board one of the busses, and he had no boat of his own; so he dug up and planted his potato-ground, and was content, talking of future doings, but caring little as yet whether they ever came to pass. One evil of their coming to pass, indeed, would be that there would be no longer time for talk, which Dan loved full as well as did Noreen, his wife.

One day, when Noreen was tired of her husband, and had gently turned him out of his cabin, he strolled to Murdoch's door, and lay down to bask in a July sun, his head resting on the wooden step, his fingers stuck into his hair, and his feet reposing among the fishy remains which lay as usual strewed round the door, and saluting

more senses than one of the passers by. Hearing a step on the shingle, Dan half opened his eyes, and saw Murdoch approaching with a leaky barrel on his shoulder, from the seams of which the red pickle was dropping down his clothes and meandering over his face.

"Them are the briny tears for which ye'll be never the worse," cried Dan. "I'd weep such tears every day, if the powers would give me leave."

"Get up, Dan, can't ye, and let me come in at my own door."

"With all the pleasure in life," said Dan, pushing the door open, and withdrawing himself as little as was necessary to let Murdoch pass.

"Eh! it's the herrings back again! O, father, what will ye do for the money? What good does the bounty do to them that can't sell their fish?" resounded from the inside of the cottage in shrill tones of anger.

Murdoch swore at the bounty and the Company, and its officers, and at those who, he said, supplanted him.

"Well, but what did they say this time?" inquired his wife. "I took the largest barrel we had,—if it did not hold thirty-two gallons, there's not one in the island that does."

"They did not dispute that this time; how should they? But they say, not a cask that leaks shall be branded for the bounty."

"Never deny the leaking," said Dan, looking in from the door. "Your own head is pickled as fine as if it stood for the bounty."

Murdoch took no notice of him, but went on impatiently. "And for the rest of the complaint, I may thank you, wife, or Meg, or both of ye: There is not a fish clean gutted in the barrel; there is not one untainted with the sun; and besides, the cask is half full of salt. You women may raise the rent-money as well as you can, for I shall never do it if this is the way you help me."

Meg began to complain that the boat was so foul that the fish were tainted before they came ashore; that her mother had given her something else to do when she should have been curing the fish; that Rob had carried off the knife, so that she was obliged to gut them with her fingers; and that, as her mother would have a large barrel and her father would not catch more fish, what could be done but to fill up the cask with salt? The quarrel was beginning to run high, when Dan interfered to divert the course of the storm.

"I wonder," said he, "ye submit to be troubled with the villains that carry themselves so high. I'd leave them to catch their own fish, and keep cool and comfortable at home."

"We must live, Dan; so you talk only nonsense."

"True, neighbour; all that are not gentlemen must live. But there's nothing in life easier than to live without their help; and I'd be proud to do it, if it were only to see them standing and standing all day, and many days, to see the shoals go by, and never a boat out to catch a

fish for them. I'd go ten miles any day to see them stand idle, with all their sheds and cranes, and the new pier with the boats lying about it as if all the world was asleep. There would be easy work for a summer's day!"

"Easy enough for them, Dan, but hard enough for us that have not our pockets full of money like them."

"Never mind the money; where's the money that will buy such a sunshine as this?"

"If people like the sunshine as well with bare limbs and an empty stomach, Dan, I have nothing to say to them. For my part, I begin to feel the north wind chilling, now I am growing old; and I can't fish till I have had my morning meal."

"O, the morning meal is the pleasantest thing in nature when it gives one no trouble; and if you would do as I do, you would have one every day in the year, without giving a triumph to them villains. Just bestir yourself to plant your potatoes, and then you are provided without more words. O, people should go to old Ireland to learn how to live!"

"I thought Ireland had been a bad place to live in."

"Devil a bit, neighbour. It is the cheerfullest, brightest land the saints reign over,—glory to them for it!"

"Then what brought you here?"

"Just somebody told Noreen's father that one might fish guineas in these seas; so he had us married, and sent us over; but, as I tell Noreen,

there is less gold here than at Rathmullin, seeing that the sun shines one half less. But we make ourselves content, as they do in Ireland; and that a man may do all the world over—let alone a woman that has a gentle cratur like me for a husband."

"But how would you have me make myself content, when I can't sell my fish either fresh or salted? I thought you had had more feeling for your neighbours, Dan."

"I! God help me, I'm as tinder-hearted as a lord's lady. It is because I am so tinder-hearted that I would have nobody bother themselves. Just give a man a cabin, and a bit of ground, and a spade, and a girl for a wife to crown all, and why should he trouble himself till the stars fall out of the sky?"

"And is that the way you do in Ireland?"

"Just so; and that is why Ireland is better than any other land."

"But I have more to provide for than my wife," said Murdoch, casting a look towards his little field.

"Make Rob dig it for you the first year," said Dan; "and if there is potatoes enough, well and good; and if not, go fish for what is wanting, or let Rob get a potato-ground for himself."

"But we shall want clothes, and money for rent."

"Tell the Company you'll work out the rent, or sell your boat for it, or beseech the saints that love to help. Any way better than bother yourself."

"Anything rather than bother myself," repeated Murdoch to himself, under the united provocations of heat, fatigue, disappointment, and jealousy. "I'll be free of them all, and never ouble myself to offer another fish to any man breathing. I can get fowl to help out our potatoes, and then we shall do well enough."

At this moment he saw farmer Duff approaching, and gave the hint to Dan, that he should observe how the farmer would behave when it should appear that he was to have no more custom from either family.

Duff declined the seat offered him by Murdoch's wife, as his first desire was to get to windward of that which strewed the ground where Meg had been curing fish. He asked Murdoch to walk a little way with him; but as Murdoch declined, Duff took the liberty of closing the door, and attempting to open the shutter which occupied the unglazed window."

"I live on the height, you know," said he, "and out of the way of your kind of business, so that I may seem to you over nice; but I was going to offer to relieve you of this litter. I have been round the village to engage for all the offal of the season, and I will take up yours at the same price with the rest."

"I can't spare it, farmer."

"Well, just as you please; but I really hope you are going to remove it directly, for your health's sake."

"I trust my health will serve me to sow and gather many a crop that shall cost me less than

your oatmeal, and be more wholesome than the pickles in yonder barrel. I have done with herrings for ever. Do you know any one that wants a boat, farmer?"

"More than you have boats to sell. There's Dan, for one. Dan, you mean to be a fisherman?"

"Perhaps I may, if the station offers me a place in a buss without any trouble; but I could not bother myself with a boat. Murdoch and I are content to be easy with our potatoes, no offence to you, I hope."

"None whatever. The only offence in the case is the offence of a wet season, if such a one should come;—where will the offence be then?"

"After a wet season comes a dry," said Dan; "and the powers will preserve us to witness it."

"Let me see your boat," said Duff. "Your relation Fergus was looking at his this morning as if he thought it would bear little more patching."

"Mine is nearly as old as his, but it will last a few fair seasons yet, I expect. I will make him the offer of it."

Duff was going there now; and having no more time to spare, Murdoch and he set off together, leaving Dan to bask as before, or to vary his amusements by watching the flow of the tide.

As they went, they looked in on Ella, with whom Duff wished to negociate as with Murdoch. Ella was in the shed built for a curing-

house, surrounded by her children, three or four of whom were assisting her in her employment of salting and packing herrings, and the rest amusing themselves with playing hide and seek among the barrels.

"What a store of new barrels!" exclaimed Murdoch: "You must lose much by the old ones."

"Not at all," replied Ella: "they serve for our coasting trade when they will no longer do for the Company. If we often got such a cask as this," pointing to one beside her, "we should seldom have to buy. Kenneth made that."

"Your boy Kenneth!" exclaimed Murdoch. "Impossible!"

"He has been well taught by his uncle," said Duff, "and has good materials. See, the staves are half an inch thick, and even throughout, and the flags laid between the seams at both ends, and the hoops as regular and well fastened as Ronald himself could have made them."

"You will only waste such a barrel," said Murdoch, "if you let the children touch the fish. My Meg has wasted tons of fish and bushels of salt."

Little Annie, who was sprinkling the salt at this moment, turned very red, and looked at her mother as petitioning for a defence. Ella smiled as she invited Murdoch to look and see how evenly the fish were packed, and told him that there was a trial of skill among the children this day, and that it was to be determined, when

her husband came home, whether Annie's salting was worthy of Kenneth's barrel.

"Kenneth is not to see till all is done," said Annie; "he is helping uncle Fergus to mend his boat, and uncle Fergus says he will make it last much longer than any body else could do but uncle Ronald."

"Ronald sent him this very morning, when he was most wanted," said Ella. "His father should have seen the landing. He brought me this barrel as a present, and he himself thought of bringing his tools and some staves in case Fergus's boat wanted mending, which it did sadly. You will excuse our going on with our work, neighbours, for you know it will not do to lose time in this weather: but the little ones will get you all you want if you will step within. Go, my little maids, and set out the bannocks and the cheese, and I will bring the whisky."

Duff could not stay, however, longer than to settle when to send his pony and panniers for the offal.

"Surely that cannot be little Kenneth!" exclaimed Murdoch, when, guided by the echo of hammering among the rocks, they came in sight of a fine tall lad repairing a boat. "Yes, it is Kenneth, so like his father, and just as handsome!"

Kenneth looked modestly happy when his uncle declared that he did not want to purchase Murdoch's boat, as he believed his own would be the best of the two by the time Kenneth went back to Islay.

Murdoch wondered why his children gave nothing but trouble while they were young, and did little but damage now that they were grown up, while other people made a profit of theirs. He took a poor price, paid in produce, from a cottager for his crazy boat, and went home wishing that he had sent Rob to learn something at the station, as he could teach him nothing at home.

Chapter II.

NEIGHBOURLY CHAT.

At a late hour of this night, the young widow Cuthbert was still busy, as she had been all day, at her employment of net-making. The song with which she lulled her infant to sleep had long ceased, and she pursued her work in perfect silence by the dim light of her solitary lamp; her thoughts were alternately with the children who lay sleeping around her, and with the husband whose place of long repose was beneath the waters. As often as a little hand stirred above the coverlid, or a rosy cheek was turned upon its pillow, the anxious mother gazed and watched, and as often as the gust swept past, or a larger billow broke upon the shingle, her heart throbbed as if she was still awaiting the return of him who should never more return. She started, at length, on hearing a tap at her door.

"It is only Ella," said a voice from the outside; and the widow hastened to open the door.

"Your husband, your husband!" she exclaimed; "no ill to him I trust. You are not in fear for him, Ella?"

"He is safe home, thank Him who guides the storms!" replied Ella: "but it is a gusty night."

"Ye look cold and your plaid drips," said the widow, setting down the lamp, and applying more fuel to her smouldering fire. "What brings ye here so late, Ella?"

"Only a message from Angus about the nets, which I should have left till the morn, but that Kenneth and I saw a glimmer beneath your door, and I knew I should find you at your occupation. We press you too close for your work, Katie. It's an ill thing for sad hearts to watch so late. Better that we should do without our nets, than that you should look as you do now."

"'Tis for my bairns," said Katie, "or I would not undergo it. O, Ella! I have been jealous of you these two hours past, if, as I supposed, you were on the rock looking out."

"No wonder, Katie; and yet I could have found in my heart to be jealous of Fergus's wife, and all the wives that were serving their husbands by the fireside, instead of breasting the wind, and mistaking every jet of the surge for a sail, as I have been doing since the sun went down. But I had Kenneth to while away the time with, and help to keep in the light. He

showed me how they hoist the lanterns at the station, and our signals will be better managed from this night forward. O Katie, you must see Kenneth, and I must tell you all that his uncle has done for him."

"But your husband," interrupted the widow; "how long was he? and in what style did his boat come ashore? and which of you first saw him? and——"

"Now, Katie, why will ye be ever asking such questions as you know it wounds me to answer? I have told you he is home safe. He has brought such a store of fish, that, busy as the curers have been on board, there is as much left for the lassies and me to do to-morrow as we can finish before the twenty-four hours are gone. And that reminds me of the nets: Angus must have those he ordered within three days, he bids me tell you; but let us look about for some one to help you, instead of your toiling with your fingers, and harassing your spirits through the night."

"We must toil while the season lasts," replied Katie; "and as for the wear of spirits," she continued smiling, "that is all fancy, and must be got over. I have nothing now to tremble for—no need to listen and look out, and I must learn not to heed the storm further than to be thankful that my bairns have about them all that makes a storm harmless. If this was a time of hardship, Ella, like some that have been known here, how I might have envied some who were kept watching, not by cold or hunger, but

only by having more employment than they could finish in the day!"

"It is a rich season, indeed," said Ella. "The shoals are such as Angus never saw before, for the multitude and the quality of the fish; and what is more, the crops are coming up kindly, and farmer Duff says that he reckons on the best harvest he has had since he took the farm."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Katie "This plenty may prevent the price from rising, and nothing else could. It almost frightens me sometimes when I see the numbers that are growing up, to think how we are to get oat and barley meal for them all."

"If you had been here all the sixteen years since I first came to this bay," said Ella, "you would wonder at the change, and be thankful to see how improvements have risen as wants increased. Now trim your lamp, and go on with your business; it will be some time yet before my husband and Kenneth have finished with the boat and come for me.—Surely you make your meshes more than an inch wide;—no, the exact measure.—Well, that is one of the improvements I speak of."

"It was folly, indeed," replied Katie, "to use such nets as I used to make—nets that caught the fry and let the full grown go free. That was the quickest way to make every season worse than the last. Then there are the boats, so much safer from having pumps, so much more favourable to the fish from being cleaner, and so much better built that our fishers need not lose

their time in short trips, but can push out into the deep seas, and stay many days together. All these things help to make fishing profitable."

"Besides," said Ella, "they help farming, which is of as much importance to us as the fishing. Corn from abroad is so dear, that we should be little better off than before, if farmer Duff did not grow more than Murdoch once did."

"The people in the other islands and in Lorn want all they can grow as much as we," replied Katie, "for their fishery grows with ours. Meat and bannocks are as dear in all the countries round as they were here last year."

"Then we may thank farmer Duff for all the pains he has taken with the soil of his fields and the stock of his pastures. He reaps just double what he reaped fifteen years ago."

"And so he had need, for there are more than double the number of mouths to feed. Besides the strangers that have come to settle, look at the families that have grown up. Where Mr. Callum used to spend a few days now and then, there is Mary Duff's husband and her five bairns; then there are your nine, Ella—how your household is increased!"

"There lies one brother under the gray stone," said Ella, "and Ronald seeks his bannocks elsewhere; but there is Fergus's tribe as well as my own; and setting one against Murdoch's son that died, and another against his daughter that went off with the soldier, there is still more than double the number by far."

"Even supposing," added Katie, "that Murdoch's daughter does not come back upon her father with her children, which I have heard is likely. But, Ella, Duff's farm ought to yield double and double for ever, if it is to go on to feed us, for our children will marry and have their little tribes as we have. If you and I live to be like many grandmothers in these islands, we shall see our twenty or thirty grand-children, and perhaps our eighty or ninety great-grand-children."

"And then," replied Ella, "may God keep us from the poverty that weighs on such! May we never see our strong men wasting on shell-fish and weeds, and our aged people dropping cold and hungry into their deathbeds, and our young mothers tending their sickly infants, knowing that food and warmth might save them, and unable to bring them either the one or the other!"

"Do not let us think of it," said Katie, looking round upon her domestic comforts. "Providence has blessed us thus far, and let us not be too keen to foresee the evil day that man's power cannot remove."

Ella was silent. Katie proceeded,—

"Surely man cannot remove that day though you say nothing. Let farmer I all he can; let every foot of land be til will nourish an ear of barley, still the come; and what else can man do?"

Ella made no direct reply. Presently served that Dan and his wife seemed not

for the evils of such a time, since they lived by choice on the poorest food, and provided themselves with nothing that they could lose in the worst of seasons.

"They are content, always content," observed the widow; "and they say they have all that is necessary; and they wonder that we can trouble ourselves to obtain anything that is not necessary: but I tell them we do not; I think a chimney, and a window, and bedding, and decent clothes all necessary for the children."

"Unless you would have them live like pigs in a sty," observed Ella. "When God gave us the charge of these little ones, he gave us no leave that ever I heard of to expose them to sickness and hardship, and to corrupt them by letting them live like brutes. By making them helpless and quick in their feelings, he has shown as plainly as if he sent a prophet to tell us, that we are to tend them as carefully and keep them as innocent as ever our labour and forethought can help us to do. Whenever I see a little one grovelling in dirt, or pining in want, or given to vice such as it should not even have heard of, I always feel as if God's plain-spoken message had been at some time misunderstood; either that the trust has been wrongly undertaken or wrongly managed."

"I knew you thought so, Ella; and yet what [illegible] parents see and mourn all this, [illegible] help themselves?"

"I will only say that if both father and [illegible] considered and judged for the best,

and worked hard, and denied themselves, no fault rests with them. Where the fault lies in such a case is a thing that Angus and I have talked over many a time. But such a case does not concern those we were speaking of—those who are content with destitution, when they might have comfort."

The widow looked on her children and sighed.

"Nay," said Ella, smiling, "there is no need for you to sigh. You might carry your bairns to Inverary, and match them with the duke's, and not a stronger, or fairer, or more innocent would you find among them all."

"May it please Providence to keep them so!"

"Why should you fear? You have comfort about you, and a prospect of abundance. Keep your tears for a darker day, if there be such in the years to come."

"Every day is dark to me now," thought the widow; but she kept down a feeling that seemed ungrateful. Ella went on, anxious to cheer her.

"I watched your little Hugh this morning, as he and my younger ones were playing on the sands, and I thought he looked as if he was made to carry his own way through the world. You should have seen him managing the dragging of the pool with the ragged net Angus gave the children. You would have thought he had been to the station to take a lesson of the superintendent, by his direction of the rest."

"Aye, I am afraid he is overbearing," the mother.

"Not at all; only spirited. If you keep

innocent with such a spirit as he has, he may be anything; he may be like Ronald himself, who is so fond of him. O, he is not overbearing. I saw him let go the net the moment little Bessie was frightened at your dog that jumped upon her; and he carried her through the water that was too deep for her to wade, as soon as ever she began to cry for me. Now I think of it, Ronald did take him to the station once, surely."

"Yes; not very long ago, the last time he was here; and Hugh saw the superintendent as you suppose, and has been full of imitation of all that he saw ever since."

"He may be superintendent himself some day or other, Katie. But does not he love Ronald very much?"

"Very much; as he ought to do."

"All my children do," replied Ella. "It is always a happy time when uncle Ronald comes. The same man that the officers respect above all who are under them is as much beloved by the little ones as if he were a soft-hearted girl."

"You had the making of Ronald, and I give you joy of your work," said the widow.

"Ah, Katie, that is the way you always silence me about Ronald," said Ella, smiling.

"Well, then, tell me about Fergus: he is your work too."

"You know all I can say about him," said Ella, sighing. "You know my pride in him, and that this very pride makes me the more grieved when I see his temper harassed and soured by care, as I feel it must go on to be,

more and more. I am always in dread of a quarrel with one neighbour or another; and more than ever now, in the high fishing season."

"Surely he has less care now than at other times," observed the widow. "There is just now abundance for every body."

"True; but this is the time for revenge. If Fergus has carried himself high towards any neighbour, or given the sharp words that are never forgotten, now is the time for his nets to be cut, or his boat set adrift, or what he has fished in the day carried off in the night."

"There are those in Garveloch, I know," said Katie, "who can bring themselves to do such things."

"Let us mention no names, Katie; but thus it is that men shame their race, and spurn the gifts they little deserve. To think that we cannot enjoy a plentiful season in peace and thankfulness, but that some must injure, and others complain! These are times when we should leave it to the osprey to follow a prey, and to the summer storms to murmur. Hark! there is Angus's step outside; and time it is, for it cannot be far from midnight."

The widow invited Angus in to warm himself by her now bright fire; but it was time for rest. Kenneth had gone home an hour before.

"He would find supper on the board," said Ella; "and now, Angus, you will be glad to do the same."

Katie promised the nets within three days; and as soon as she had closed the door behind

her guests, sat down again for one other hour to help the fulfilment of her promise, and then slept all the better for having watched till the wind went down.

Chapter III.

KINDRED NOT KINDNESS.

It was not very long before Ella's fears on account of her brother Fergus were in part realized, though the evil day was deferred by an arrangement offered by Angus and eagerly accepted by his brother-in-law. The herring fishery being peculiarly abundant this year, Angus wanted more help on board his vessel; and as it was expected that the cod would be plentiful in proportion, Angus might in his turn assist Fergus, when the herring shoals were past, and the cod which follow to make prey of them should become the chief object of the fishery. Fergus laboured from July to October for a certain share of the herring produce; and Angus was to go out with Fergus in all the intervals of his coasting trips during the late autumn and winter. While Fergus was on board Angus's vessel, all went well; for Angus had no children. He might spread his nets to dry on the beach, and his youngest child was guard enough to set over them. He never left his fish on board all night, while he was at home, think-

ing it wrong to put such a temptation to theft in the way of any one; but if he had, no harm would have been done out of malice to himself, as was too frequently the practice in this fishery.

Poor Fergus was not so secure, as he had found before, and was destined to find again. Like most men of hasty tempers, who are besides subject to care, he had enemies among those who did not know how to make allowance for him; and were not disposed to forgive harsh expressions which the offender was apt to forget that he had used. Dan, easy and content as he seemed to be, had the selfishness common to lazy people; and there is no more inveterate enemy to good-will than selfishness. Dan was not, like many of his countrymen, ready with his oaths and his cudgel at a moment's warning, if anything went amiss; but Dan could drawl out the most provoking things imaginable, and enjoy their effect upon an irritable person, and show that he enjoyed it; and having thus encouraged a quarrel, in which he did not give his adversary the satisfaction of bearing his share heartily, he let it drop; but had no objection to see it carried on by somebody else. He amused himself with watching what befel Fergus, and with laughing at every little distress which arose subsequent to a certain dispute which had once occurred between them. He did no harm with his own hands, but people knew that he did not object to seeing it done; and such sympathy affords great advantage to the doers of mischief. Among these was Rob Murdoch, a doer of mis-

chief by nature as some said,—at all events by habit, and very often by express will. Rob had never felt at ease with Ella or any of the family since the day of his upsetting the boat; though there was never a look or word from any of them which could have made him uncomfortable, if his own consciousness had not. He was always ready to suppose offence, and found no difficulty in creating it where he was not liked, and only tolerated on account of long neighbourhood and distant relationship. He kept out of Ella's way, for he was mightily afraid of her. He hated Angus, having been formerly taught by his father that Angus was a traitor who intended to supplant him, and the impression remained on his stupid mind long after the cause had been removed. Ronald was out of his way entirely; and Fergus was therefore the only one exposed to his poor spite, while he was the one least able to disregard it. The time had been when Fergus would have scorned the idea of being moved by anything Rob could say; but Fergus was more easily moved than formerly, and it stung him to hear Rob predict, as he lounged on the shore, that the wind would be contrary when Fergus wished it fair; to be met on his return from an unsuccessful expedition with the news that everybody else had caught a vast deal of fish; and, above all, to see the enemy fretting the children into a passion, which was a frequent pastime of Rob's when he had nothing better to do. Out of these provocations arose quarrels; and out of quarrels, Rob's de-

sire of revenge; a desire which he could gratify only in a small way as long as Fergus worked for his brother-in-law. Rob asked several times for the loan of Fergus's boat during the herring season; and as he made the request in his father's name, it was not refused; but when it was found that the boat received some injury each time, Fergus very reasonably desired Rob to repair the mischief as often as he caused it. Being too lazy to do this, the loan was denied to him, and then he made bold to use the boat without leave when he knew that Fergus was absent; and the exclamations of the children having brought their mother out to see what was the matter, the ill-will was not lessened by the addition of a woman's tongue. No terms were kept after the railing bout between Rob and Janet on the sands: they regarded and acted towards each other as enemies from that day forward.

Angus offered Fergus a benefit, as he called it, to finish off the season with; that is, all the fish caught in the last trip were to be Fergus's; and to the winnings of this trip he looked for the means of finally making up his rent, and of improving the clothing of the children before the winter. The signs of the weather were anxiously watched by himself and his family, the nets were carefully repaired, the casks looked to, more salt brought in from the station, and every preparation completed the evening before, when the nets and stores were carried on board, and all made ready for starting at dawn.

misty morning, such as would not have tempted either Janet or Ella abroad if this had been any other trip than the last of the season: but as it was, they attended their husbands down to the shore, with their children flocking about them. As it was too foggy to let them see the vessel at fifty yards distance from the beach they presently returned, walking so slowly, that before they reached home the mists had partly dispersed at the appearance of the rising sun, and opened a prospect along the shore.

"There's Rob turning the point," cried one of the little ones.

"Rob at this time of the morning? Impossible!" said Ella. "They that have no more to do than he are not stirring so early. It is he, however. Look, Janet, how he peeps at us from behind the rock! I will go and speak with him, for he has no quarrel with me, and I do not forget we are cousins."

It was not so easy, however, to catch him. When he saw Ella approaching, he withdrew from sight; and when she turned the point, he was already high up among the rocks, on a path which he could not have reached without exercising more activity than was his wont.

"I believe the man thinks," said Ella to herself, "as Mr. Callum used to do, that I am a witch, for he flees me as a fowl flees the hawk. If I could but win his ear for half an hour, there might be an end of this ill-will between him and Fergus, which is a scandal to relations, and to those who, living far from war, ought to live in peace."

Where enmity once creeps in, it is difficult to preserve peace with any of the parties concerned. After having missed Rob, Ella found that Janet was offended at her having sought him; and it was with some difficulty that she brought her sister-in-law to acknowledge that a quarrel has done quite enough mischief when it separates two families, and that no advantage can arise from its involving a third.

Before many hours had elapsed, the children came running to their mother, crying—

"The boat! the boat! She is warping into the Bay. Father will be on shore presently."

"It cannot be our boat!" said Ella, turning pale, however, as she spoke. "It must be one of the station boats."

A glance showed her that it was indeed her husband's vessel coming in already, instead of three or four days hence, as she had expected. Her only way of accounting for this quick return was by supposing that some accident had happened on board. The wind was contrary, so that it must be some time before the crew could land, and Ella was not disposed to wait for tidings. She commanded her children not to go out and tell Janet, who, being busy within doors, might not know of the return; and then went down to the place where Murdoch's old boat was lying, obtained a hasty leave to use it and help to launch it, seized the oars and pushed off, and was presently alongside her husband's vessel. Fergus was already half over the side, ready to jump down to his sister, and impatient to gain

the shore, while Angus in vain attempted to hold him back.

"Push off, Ella!" cried Angus. 'Do not come near till I bring him to reason."

Seeing that her husband and brother were both safe, Ella repressed her anxiety to know what had happened, and by one vigorous pull shot off out of Fergus's reach. He threw himself back into the vessel, and trod the little deck like one in a towering passion.

"My husband! my brother!" cried Ella, in a tone which reached the hearts of both, "you have not quarrelled?"

"O no! nor ever shall," said Angus, laying his hand on Fergus's shoulder, "and least of all this day."

"Do you think I could fall out with Angus?" said Fergus. "No! I must be sunk indeed before I could do that. It is he who has kept me from ruin till now, and it is he who would make me think I am not ruined to-day."

Ruined!—The truth was soon told. Fergus's nets were destroyed. They had been safe the night before. This morning, when he was preparing to throw them, he found them cut almost to shreds. If he had had money to buy more, they could not be provided in time. The season was over; his benefit was lost; and with it went all hopes of making up his rent by the day it would become due, and of supplying the additions he had proposed to the comforts of his little ones.

Ella's suspicions lighted upon Rob even before she heard Fergus declare that it could be nobody

else. A sudden thought having struck her, she came alongside once more, and having communicated with her husband in a tone which Fergus could not overhear, she again departed, shaping her course for Murdoch's dwelling.

Rob was lying on the beach asleep, as she expected; and beside him was Dan, also asleep. If they had been awake, they would not have seen Angus's vessel which was now behind the point to their right. Ella stepped on shore and wakened Rob, saying,

"I see you have no business of your own this bright noon, Rob; so come and take an oar with me."

Rob started up when he saw who was standing over him. He wished his tall cousin far over seas, or anywhere but at his elbow.

"Ask Dan," said he. "Dan! here's my cousin Ella wants a trip. Take an oar with her, will ye?"

"No," replied Ella. "Let Dan finish his dream."

"Meg is stouter than I at the oar," pleaded Rob.

"It is you that I want, and that this moment," said Ella, pointing his way to the boat, towards which Rob shuffled unwillingly, like a school-boy going in search of the rod with which he is to be whipped.

Instead of giving him an oar, Ella took both; and as he sat opposite her with nothing to do, he felt very silly, and this feeling was a bad preparation for what was to follow. When they

were fairly beyond the breakers, Ella rested on her oars, and, looking her companion full in the face, asked him where he had passed the previous night. Rob looked up to the sky, back to the shore, and around upon the waters, and then scratching his head, asked,

"What was that ye said, cousin Ella?"

"You heard what I said."

"Well; where should I have passed the night?"

"That is for you to answer. I ask again where you were when the moon set last night?"

Rob shuffled in his talk as well as in his gait. He told how he oftentimes spent his time on the rocks rather than bear the smell of putrid fish under his father's roof; and how Meg had foretold a bad night, and it turned out fine; and many other things that had nothing to do with Ella's question. She let him go on till, by turning the point, they came in sight of the Flora standing south-west. She directed his attention to it, saying that the Flora was her object. Rob swore a deep oath and demanded to be set on shore again, cursing himself for having come without knowing whither he was to be taken. Ella's steady eye was still upon him when she asked the reason of this sudden horror of meeting his cousins and boarding their boat: adding,

"I fancy it is not so very long since you were on board the Flora of your own accord."

Rob had sense enough to see that he only betrayed himself by showing eagerness to get back, and therefore held his peace till they approached the Flora, when he hailed Angus, requesting him

to help Ella on board; and then said to his companion,

"I'll take the boat straight back with pleasure, cousin, with your thanks, I suppose, to Duncan Hogg for the use of it."

"Not yet," said Ella; "I have more to say to you. Now, Rob, tell me honestly whether you were at home all last night, and here the mischief may end; but if you will not give an account to us, you must to the magistrate at the station. If you are innocent you can have no objection to clear yourself; if you are guilty, depend upon it you will meet with more mercy from your cousins than from a stranger who comes to execute justice?"

"As sure as ever anything happens, you always suspect me," muttered Rob. "What care I what happens to Fergus, or what he makes of his benefit?"

"O then, you know what has happened," observed Ella, "and yet I have not told you."

Rob, finding that he only gave new occasion of suspicion by everything he said, took refuge in sullen silence, got on board at Ella's command, and sat immovably looking at the sea as they steered for Islay, having fastened the little boat to the stern of the Flora.

Rob's courage or obstinacy failed him when the station became visible, the white house of Mr. M'Kenzie, the magistrate, appearing at some little distance above and behind the pier, the cooperage, the curing house and the village. Ella, who watched an opportunity of saving the

culprit from a public exposure, was by his side the moment he showed an inclination to speak.

"If ye will only just say ye are willing to make reparation, and will never play such an unkind prank again," said she, "I will intercede with Fergus to forgive you."

"What may be the cost of the nets?"

"More than you can make up without hard work; but it may be made up; and I would fain set ye home, Rob, without having seen the magistrate's face."

Rob muttered that he did not see why he should be brought to justice more than others that did the same trick. It was but a prank; and when they were boys and no magistrate within reach, nobody talked of justice.—Ella reminded him that Mr. Callum had united all the offices of law and justice in his own person when the island was inhabited by few except themselves; but that circumstances had now changed, and relations multiplied, and that property must be protected from the player of pranks as well as from the thief.

Fergus, touched by the kindness of his brother and sister, controlled his passion, and received Rob's submission with more grace than it was tendered with, agreeing to take compensation as the offender should be able to give it, provided nets could be obtained at the station on promise of future payment.

Chapter IV.

LOOKING BEFORE AND AFTER.

None of the party left the station without having seen the face of the magistrate. He was in the store-house when Fergus went to make his application for nets.

"What makes you want so many feet of netting at once?" asked Mr. Mackenzie; "and in such a hurry too. I hope yours have not been destroyed?"

"Indeed but they have, your honour; and another such loss would destroy me."

"The law must be put in force in its utmost rigour," declared the magistrate;—whereupon Rob hastily withdrew to the cooperage, where he might be out of sight. "Scarcely a day passes," continued Mr. Mackenzie, "without information of some act of violence or another. How do you suppose this happens, Mr. Angus?"

"Through jealousy, I believe, sir. We seldom hear of thefts——"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Angus. I have had several complaints within a few days of depredations on the fishing grounds in the lochs where the cod are just showing themselves."

"I rather think even these thefts must arise from revenge more than from a desire of gain; for there is or ought to be no want at present through the whole extent of the fishery. Some, like my brother Fergus, are reduced to difficulty

by the destruction of their implements; but in such a season as this, there can be no absolute distress for any who are willing to work."

"I scarcely know which is the most painful," replied the magistrate; "to see men snatching bread out of one another's mouths through jealousy and spite, or under the impulse of pressing want. The worst of it is, the last usually follows the first. This enemy of your brother's, who has been injuring him now without a pretence, may plead starvation in excuse for some other act of violence hereafter."

"I trust you are mistaken, sir," replied Angus. "I trust the miseries of poverty that I have seen elsewhere are far from our shores."

"The first sign of their approach, Angus, is when men begin to fancy their interests opposed to each other,—which the interests of men in society can never be. Fair competition leads to the improvement of the state of all; but the jealousy which tempts to injure any interest whatever is the infallible token that distress is at hand. You have seen enough of the world to know this to be a general truth, Angus. Why do you dispute it in the present case?"

"Perhaps my own interest in the issue blinds me," returned Angus. "I have seen enough in other countries of what you describe to make me melancholy when I witness men pulling one another's fortunes to pieces instead of building up the prosperity of the whole by labouring together at that of every part. Whether I hear of different classes in a commercial country peti-

tioning for impediments to be thrown in one another's way, or see (as I saw in Canada) jealous neighbours levelling one another's fences in the dark, or laying siege to them in the day-time, I feel sure that destruction is ready to step in and beggar them all, whether it be in the shape of a prohibitory duty imposed by government, or of wild cattle that come to trample down the corn on which the quarrellers depend."

"You once told us of some who united to make a road," said Ella, who had now joined her husband. "That was wiser than pulling down fences."

"Where all helped to give each other the fair advantage of a road," replied her husband, "a flourishing settlement presently arose among the fertile fields. Where the fences were levelled, there was soon no need of fences. Some who had dwelt within them lay under the sod, hunger having cut short their days, and others were gone in search of food, leaving their fields to grow into a wilderness once more."

"Theirs was indeed the lowest degree of folly that can be conceived."

"Not quite," observed Mr. Mackenzie. "I can fancy a lower, though I do not ask you to receive it as fact. This letting in of wild cattle to trample the corn took place when but few wanted to be fed, and those few had immediate resources. If, instead of this act of folly, the perpetrators had waited till hundreds and thousands were in expectation, with an appetite which the most ample harvests could not satisfy, and

had set fire to the produce at the very season when it was most wanted, under the idea of vexing the holders of the land,, what would you say then?

"There is nothing to be said, sir, but that such would be an act of mere madness,—too evidently madness to be committed by more than an individual, and that individual an escaped maniac.

"The school of ignorance is the innermost court of Bedlam," replied Mr. Mackenzie; "and while there are any patients remaining in it, it is possible that corn-stacks may be burned by discontented people with the notion of revenging the wrongs of the starving. But I put it only as a possibility, you know.—Can it be, Angus, that you do not see the tendency of the acts of violence that are disturbing this very district? Do you not see distress and ruin in full prospect if they are not checked, and if, moreover, the temper of the people be not directly reversed?"

"Our resources are so improved that I would fain hope the best; and yet our numbers increase in full proportion, so that we had not need waste any of our capital."

"I think not indeed. I have been visiting every station on the coast and in the islands, and I find the same state of things everywhere,—a prosperity so unusual in these districts, that the people think their fortune secure for ever, while they are hastening, by every possible means, the approach of distress."

"I hope you find the farms and pastures im-

proving with the fishery?" observed Angus.—"Everything depends upon the food keeping pace with the employment."

"The farms are improving to the utmost that skill and labour can make them improve. There is the powerful stimulus of an increasing demand, while there are increasing facilities of production. There is more manure, there are better implements, and more cattle; so that some farms produce actually double what they did when the fishery began."

Angus shook his head, observing that this was not enough.

"They have done their best already in the way of increase," said he. "They may be improved for some time to come, and to a great degree; but each improvement yields a less return: so that they will be further and further perpetually from again producing double in ten years; and all this time the consumers are increasing at a much quicker rate."

"Not double in ten years surely?" said Ella.

"Certainly not; but say twenty, thirty, fifty, a hundred, any number of years you choose;—still, as the number of people doubles itself for ever, while the produce of the land does not, the people must increase faster than the produce. If corn produced corn without being wedded to the soil, the rate of increase might be the same with that of the human race. Then two sacks of barley might grow out of one, and two more again out of each of those two—proceeding from one to two, four, eight, sixteen, thirty-two, sixty-four, and so on."

"If capital could be made to increase in this way, I see, Angus, that there could never be too many people in the world, or in our little world, Garveloch."

"Or if, on the other hand, human production could be kept down to the same rate with the production of our fields, we need have no fear of a deficiency of food. If the number of producers increased only in proportion to the increase of food, there would be no distress of the kind our islands were formerly afflicted with, and may be afflicted with again. But nobody thinks of establishing such a proportion; and in the meanwhile, food is yielded, though in larger quantities, in less and less proportions, while the eaters go on doubling and doubling their numbers perpetually."

"Then, to be sure, it is madness to destroy one another's means of living," cried Ella. "It seems the first duty of everybody to increase the production of food; and yet, here we are, cutting one another's nets to pieces, and driving the fish away on which we depend for our subsistence!"

"You do not wonder now," said Mr. Mackenzie, "at my grief for the ignorance of the people, and my disgust at the quarrels that have such consequences. I assure you the season is actually lost in some of the northern lochs; for, not only are some fishers left without nets or lines, but the fish have made no stay, being alarmed by tumult; and it is but too probable that they will not return."

"And all this time," continued Angus, "these

very quarrellers go on marrying early, and raising large families—that is, they bring offspring into the world while they are providing as fast as possible for their future starvation."

"There is no need to do here as the Romans did," said Mr. Mackenzie, "and as many other nations have done—no need to offer bounties for the increase of population."

"I think not indeed," said Ella. "It seems a thing to be checked, rather than encouraged."

"All depends on time and circumstances, Ella. When Noah and his little tribe stepped out of the ark into a desolated world, the great object was to increase the number of beings, who might gather and enjoy the fruits which the earth yielded, in an abundance overpowering to the few who were there to consume. And the case is the same with every infant nation which is not savage."

"Savages do not value or subsist upon the fruits of the earth so much as upon the beasts of the field," said Ella;—"at least so Angus told me of those who have retreated from before us in America."

"Savages care for little beyond supplying the pressing wants of the moment," replied Angus. "They make no savings; they have no capital; and their children die off as fast as poverty and disease can drive them out of the world. There is no growth of either capital or population among savages."

"Those have indeed a poor chance for life and health," said Mr. Mackenzie, "whose pa-

rents feed at the best on raw roots and berries, who sometimes keep themselves alive by swallowing grubs and worms, and at other times fast for a week together. Shrunk, deformed, and weakly themselves, their offspring are little likely to survive a scarcity, even if it were possible to rear them under the most favourable circumstances."

"It is absurd," said Angus, "to doubt the rate at which the human race increases on account of the decrease of numbers among savages. The whole question is concerning the proportion which capital and population bear to each other; and it cannot therefore be tried where no capital exists."

"I suppose," observed Ella, "that flocks and herds are the first capital which a tribe possesses in any large quantity. How do numbers increase among people who seek pasture but do not till the ground?'

"Such tribes are most numerous where pastures are fine, and weak where the natural produce of the earth is scanty. But each continues a tribe, and cannot become a nation while following a pastoral life. Their flocks cannot multiply beyond a certain point unless the food of the flocks is increased; and they who subsist upon the flocks cannot, in like manner, multiply beyond a certain point, unless the flocks on which they feed are multiplied."

"But they not only do not increase," observed Mr. Mackenzie, "they are lessened perpetually by one or another of the unfortunate accidents to which their condition subjects them,

Pastoral tribes are particularly prone to war Instead of keeping possession of a certain territory on which they always dwell, they rove about from one tract of country to another, leaving undefended some which they call their own;—another tribe takes possession; and then comes a struggle and a destructive war, which reduces their numbers. Many of these tribes live in a state of continual hostility, and therefore dwindle away."

"But when they begin to settle and till the ground," said Ella, "I suppose their numbers increase again."

"Yes; the Jews, after they were established in Canaan, became an agricultural nation, and multiplied very rapidly. It was made, both by their laws and customs, a point of duty to marry and to marry young; and when the check of war was removed, their small territory became very thickly peopled."

"I suppose it was to repair the waste of war," said Ella, "that the bounty on population was offered among the Romans."

"Not only from this cause," replied Mr. Mackenzie, "but to repair the breaches made in other ways. In the early days of Rome, the population was too large for the capital in intervals of peace, as appears from the law of their king Romulus, that no child should be exposed to die in the desert before three years of age—a proof that it had been the previous practice to expose children under that age. In after times —in the days of Roman glory—the population

was apt to decrease, even in times of peace, from the faults in the distribution of property. The land had fallen into the hands of a few great proprietors, and was not tilled by free labour. Swarms of slaves were brought in from all conquered countries, and they alone were employed where free labour should have claimed a share of labour and reward; and there was therefore no subsistence for a middling and lower class of free people. Their numbers dwindled so as to alarm their rulers and give occasion to express laws for the encouragement of population. If, instead of passing laws to promote early marriages, and offering privileges to those who had a certain number of children, the Roman emperors had allowed liberty to the people they governed to labour and subsist, there would have been no complaint of a deficiency of numbers, but rather an inquiry, as there is among us, how all that are born are to be fed?"

"But do you mean, sir," said Angus, "that there were not children born to the lower classes of the Romans, or that they were born and died through want?"

"Multitudes that were born died immediately, from being exposed; and besides this, marriage was less practised during these ages of the Roman empire than among the same number of people in any other country."

"The laws were not of much use then."

"And how can we wonder, when it was actually the custom to give away corn gratis to thousands upon thousands who had no means of earning

it! What inducement has a man to marry, when he must either expose his children, or see them die at home, or take his chance of a gratuitous dole of food for them? The laws, if they acted at all, would not act upon these large classes, but upon those of a higher rank, who would marry if there were no law."

"If in any country," observed Ella, "there are no laws to encourage or to check marriage, it seems as if that country ought to afford a fair example of the natural increase of numbers."

"Nay," said her husband, "human laws have little influence in this case, while the natural laws which regulate the production of life and of capital are seldom suffered to act unchecked. Leave the people of any country as free as you please to marry or not as they like, still, if capital is controlled in any way, the population is controlled also."

"Where then," inquired Ella, "does capital act the most freely? Where in the world may we see an example of the natural proportions in which men and subsistence increase?"

"There has never been an age or country known," replied Mr. Mackenzie, "where at once the people have been so intelligent, their manners so pure, and their resources so abundant, as to give the principle of increase an unobstructed trial. Savage life will not do, because the people are not intelligent. Colonies will not do, because they are not free from vicious customs. An old empire will not do, because the means of subsistence are restricted."

"A new colony of free and intelligent people in a fertile country affords the nearest approach to a fair trial," observed Angus. "In some of the best settlements I saw in America, the increase of capital and of people went on at a rate that would scarcely be believed in an old country."

"And that of the people the fastest, I suppose?"

"Of course; but still capital was far a-head, though the population is gaining upon it every year. When the people first went, they found nothing but capital—all means of production and no consumers but themselves. They raised corn in the same quantity from certain fields every year. There was too much corn at first in one field for a hundred mouths; but this hundred became two, four, eight, sixteen hundred, and so on, till more and more land was tilled, the people still spreading over it, and multiplying perpetually."

"And when all is tilled and they still multiply," said Ella, "they must improve their land more and more."

"And still," said Angus, "the produce will fall behind more and more, as every improvement, every outlay of capital yields a less return. Then they will be in the condition of an old country like England, where many are but half fed, where many prudent determine not to marry, and where the imprudent must see their children pine in hunger, or waste under disease till they

are ready to be carried off by the first attack of illness."

"May this never be the case in Garveloch!" cried Ella.

"The more waste of capital there is," said Mr. Mackenzie, "the sooner will that day come."

"But our islands are now in the state of a new colony, like that Angus was speaking of," said Ella. "Want must be far from us at present."

"Except that we have not a fertile soil or a good climate," replied her husband. "It is true we do not depend entirely on corn;—we had not need for our home supply can never be large. We have the resource of fish, but it is so precarious a resource, that we ought to keep some means of subsistence in reserve. If the herrings should desert us for a season or two, and the harvest fail, some of us must starve, or all be half-starved, unless we have a stock in reserve."

"Poor Fergus!" exclaimed Ella. "No wonder he was grieved and angry this morning! Five children and no capital stored up! He may well watch the seasons and tremble at a storm."

"I am sorry," observed Mr. Mackenzie, "that he will not give up the name of the offender who has injured him. It is necessary to the public safety that this wanton destruction of property should be put an end to; and I give it in charge to you, Angus, to see that full compensation is

made, or that the culprit is delivered into my hands to be made an example of. If it had been generally known that I am here to administer the law, I would not have yielded this much; but as I have only just arrived, and am but beginning to make known the law, I do not insist on an information being laid this time. Henceforward I always shall; for connivance at an offence is itself an offence."

Chapter V

MORE HASTE THAN GOOD SPEED.

Fergus meanwhile was consulting Ronald as to the best mode in which Rob's labour could be applied towards repairing the damage he had caused. He was too stupid and awkward to be entrusted with any occupation in which he would not be overlooked by some more competent person; and Ronald knew, though he did not say so, that there would be perpetual danger of a quarrel if Rob became Fergus's assistant in fishing. Ronald, therefore, kindly offered to give Rob some inferior employment about the cooperage, providing for his support out of his wages, and paying the rest over to Fergus till the whole debt should be cleared. Rob, to whom all labour was disagreeable alike, sulkily consented, and swore at himself and everybody else when he

saw the Flora clear out from the little harbour, and leave him behind to repair by the labour of weeks and months the mischief he had done in two short hours. He had not only the cost of the nets to pay, but the amount which Fergus would have cleared by the benefit he was now prevented from taking.

While he was involuntarily saving during this winter, his neighbours in Garveloch were going on as variously as might be expected from the difference in their knowledge, in their desires, and in their habits. The Company was prosperous in a very high degree, and so, therefore, might their labourers of every rank have been; but in this society, as in all, some were wise and some were foolish; some provided for a time of darkness, and some did not.

None were more provident than Angus and Ella, or provident in a wiser manner. Seeing so clearly as they did the importance of an increase of capital in a society which was adding to its numbers every day, they reflected and consulted much on the modes and rates of increase of capital differently applied, and saw that the interest of the Company, and of every individual employed by it, was one and the same. Since capital grows from savings only, there seemed no hope that that of the Company should keep pace with the demands upon it; but something might be done by increasing the value of the capital,—by making it secure, by lessening the attendant expenses, by using every possible method of making production easy and rapid. If

all the corn that was raised in the islands had been used for seed-corn, instead of nine-tenths of it being eaten; if all the fish had been turned into its market-price on the spot, without any expense of curing, packing, and conveying, this capital would still have doubled itself much more slowly than the number of people who were to subsist upon it; and when their subsistence and all attendant expenses were subtracted, the process became much slower. Yet it was a favourable time and a favourable set of circumstances for capital to grow in. The property was secure, being under the protection of law well administered, and under the management of an united body of directors. The expenses were small, the position of the different stations being advantageous, and the required apparatus very simple. Production was at the same time easy; for the herrings came regularly, and the seasons had thus far been favourable. Here, then, capital might grow, if ever or anywhere; and it did grow; but the demands upon it grew still faster; and therefore Angus and Ella guarded the capital of their employers as if it had been their own, while they added to their private store as fast as was consistent with a due enjoyment of the fruits of their labour. Though they had nine children, they were at present in more favourable circumstances for saving than some of their neighbours who had few or none. Dan and his Norcen, for instance, saved nothing; how should they, when their hut scarcely protected them from the rain and snow, or their

clothing from the chilling winds,—when there was not even the slightest preparation made for the tender little one that was soon to come into their charge? There can be no saving expected from those whose commonest wants are not supplied. The Murdochs were in nearly as poor a condition; and since they had never managed to avoid sinking, even in their best days, it was scarcely likely that they should now. Fergus toiled and toiled, and just continued to keep his place in the little society, but he could do no more. The consumption of his family just equalled the supply afforded by his labour, so that he could not, with all his efforts, set apart anything to begin saving upon. His nest-egg (whenever he thought he had one) had always disappeared before the day was out. There was nothing for it, but hoping that good seasons and full employment would last till his boys' labour should more than equal their consumption, and should not only release him from the charge of their maintenance, but assist in the support of the little ones, who must be nearly helpless for years to come.

If this society had been constituted like that of Rome, of which we have spoken, there would have been little or no saving, and therefore no provision for an increase in the number of its members. Where society is composed of a few very rich people and a multitude very poor, the least saving of all is made. The rich only *can* save in such a case, and they do not perceive a sufficient motive for doing so. They reckon on

being always rich, and do not see why they should not enjoy their wealth to the utmost, year by year. Where society is composed of a few moderately rich and many sufficiently supplied with necessaries, there is a much better chance of an accumulation of capital, since the majority of the people have then a hope of raising their children to the rank of the moderately rich. They are free from the recklessness of the miserably poor, and from the thoughtless extravagance of the possessors of overgrown wealth. To this middling class belonged Angus, the widow Cuthbert, Ronald and the Duffs; and they therefore made the largest savings in proportion to their earnings. Mr. Mackenzie spent all his income, having no children, and feeling himself provided for for life. The naval superintendent, captain Forbes, a spirited young officer, was so far from attempting to save, that he flung his money about during his flying visits to the stations till he had none left, and barely escaped debt. But Duff, who was not placed beyond the danger of bad seasons, widow Cuthbert, and Angus, who had children dependent on them, and Ronald, who regarded the families of Ella and Fergus with strong affection, had motives to save, and did their full share towards making the capital of the society grow.

One day the next spring, Ronald appeared before his sister's door.

"Welcome, brother!" exclaimed Ella. "Is it a leisure day with you? and are you come to spend it with us?"

"It is a leisure day, and the last I shall have for long; and I am come to tell you why, and to consult with Angus about a little business of his. This is the reason that I came myself instead of sending Kenneth."

"I began to think you never meant to come, you have been so considerate in sparing Kenneth. But sit ye down,—aye, outside the door if you like, for it is a true spring day,—and Angus will be up from the boat presently."

Angus was soon seen hastening to meet Ronald, who then told his news. Captain Forbes had arrived at the islay station in high spirits. A new market for their produce was unexpectedly opened in the West Indies. It was his belief that all the fish they could possibly prepare during the season would be insufficient to meet the sudden demand; and he came to see how many boats could be mustered, and how many labourers could be withdrawn from other employments to aid in the fishery.

"Now is Fergus's time," said Ella, "for getting his two boys hired at the station. They are young, to be sure; but as so many labourers are wanted, their services will be received, I dare say."

"Now is Rob's time for clearing off his debt to Fergus," observed Angus; "for I suppose, Ronald, wages will rise at the cooperage. More barrels will be wanted than you can easily prepare."

"No doubt," replied Ronald. "Now is your time, Angus, for building the platform you were

talking of last year; and I came to offer what help I can. I will spare Kenneth for a week now to work with you; and I give you notice that you must take him now or not at all. And if there should be any difficulty about the little capital wanted for the work, I have a few pounds which are much at your service."

Angus thankfully accepted the offer of his boy's help, but had no occasion to borrow money. He should lose no time, he said, in erecting his platform, if the tidings Ronald brought should prove correct. Much time and labour in lading and unlading his vessel might be economized by the employment of a crane; and he thought he could not invest his savings better than in making such a provision at the commencement of a busier season than had ever been known in Garveloch.

Ella's apprehension was that the demand would be only temporary. On this head Ronald could give her no satisfaction, as he did not know enough of the circumstances to judge: but he thought that all who were called upon to use only their labour, or a small capital which yields a quick return, might rejoice in this sudden prosperity without any fear of consequences; and even Angus's investment of fixed capital would be perfectly safe. If it was doubtful the year before whether the erection of a platform and crane would not be worth while, it could scarcely fail to answer now, when there was to be a large addition to the profits of an ordinary season, even if that addition should be only temporary.

Angus proposed going to the spot to take measurements, and make an estimate of the expense.

"If you will wait till noon is past," said Ella, "I can go with you. I must be taught your plan, Angus, that I may answer for you when you are absent."

Another object in this delay was to set her brother at liberty to go where she knew his heart was all this time. While she was finishing her household business, uncle Ronald went down with some of the little ones to launch a tiny boat,—a present from Kenneth,—in one of the pools on the beach. Their mother heard their shouts of glee, and thought within herself that there were no festival days like those when her brother or her boy came from the station.

In a few minutes the children were playing without their uncle's assistance. He had gone to the widow Cuthbert's. Katie frankly held out her hand as he entered, and bade him welcome to Garveloch. She was just spreading the table for dinner, and invited him to sit down with herself and the children: but when he declined, she made no ceremony, but called the little ones from their play; and the meal went forward as if no guest had been there, except that Katie conversed freely with her friend Ronald.

"Hugh is much grown," observed Ronald. "I did not know him at first when he came to see me land."

"I knew you though," cried Hugh, "and I went to see whether you brought me a tub like

the one you gave Bessie. I want a tub for my fish when I catch any."

"I will make you a tub bigger than Bessie's, and Kenneth shall bring it."

"I wish you would bring it," cried Hugh. "You promised me a boat the last time you came, a long, long while ago, and you never sent it."

"Yes, indeed I did, Hugh, and I thought Kenneth had given it to you."

Katie explained that it had been delivered safe, but had strangely disappeared before Hugh had seen it; and that as he never asked about it, she had not vexed him with explaining what had happened.

"Why did not you ask me for another?" said Ronald. "I do wish you would be free with me as an old friend."

"Indeed I always am," replied Katie. "I would ask a favour of you as easily as of Angus or Fergus."

After a moment's pause, Ronald told his tidings of the prospect of a busy season, and offered to purchase hemp for the widow and send it by Kenneth, before the price should rise, if she had not already a sufficient stock for her net-making for the year. Katie thankfully accepted his services, and looked so cheerfully round upon her children, when she heard of the approaching prosperity, that Ronald was glad he had taken courage to come and tell her.

When the meal was over, Katie took up her employment and seemed far from wishing that

Ronald should go; but she kept little Hugh beside her to show Ronald how he was learning to help his mother in her work.

By the time several subjects of mutual interest had been talked over, Ronald recollected that the hour was long past when he ought to have met Angus on the beach, and he rose to go, offering to look in again in the evening before his departure; to which Katie made no objection.

Dinner was over at Angus's house, but Ella, who guessed where her brother was, would not have him called.—She suspected the truth,—that he came to observe whether there was any chance of his winning Katie at last, and to consult his sister, in case of being unable to discover for himself how Katie felt towards him. He was rather disheartened by the interview. She was so frank and friendly in her manner that he could not believe she felt any of the restraint he laboured under—anything more than the regard which she testified to his sister and brother. Ella could not contradict him. She was far from thinking the case a hopeless one; but she believed that time and patience were still and would long be necessary. She assured her brother that precipitation would probably ruin all; and that his best chance was in quietly waiting till he should have further opportunities of winning upon her. This determined Ronald not to speak at present, as, in his impatience of suspense, he had nearly resolved to do.

When the little party went down to the place where Angus proposed to erect his new building,

several loungers gathered round to watch what was going to be done. Ronald was looked upon as so awfully learned a man, especially when using his rule and frowning over his calculations, that strangers,—such strangers as were in Garveloch,—did not venture to speak to him. They made their inquiries of the children in preference.

First came Noreen lagging along the shore in the gray cloak which she was supposed never to put off, as she had never been seen without it, winter or summer. Wrapt in it, and hanging over her arm, head downwards, was her baby, feebly crying, as usual, and as usual disregarded; for nothing short of a shrill scream seemed to be thought by Noreen worthy of attention. Her cap was nearly the same colour as her cloak, and her hair did not tend, to ornament her further than by helping to conceal a black eye.

"Annie, darling, and how busy you all seem! And you nursing the babby as if you'd had one in your arms all your days, my darling."

"I dare not hold him as you hold your's," said Annie. "Look! the little thing's face is as black——O look!"

"As black as your eye," cried Bessie.

"Is it my eye, darling? O, it's a trifle that Dan gave me,—the villain,—when the spirits were in him."

"What! did Dan strike you?" cried Annie, who was old enough to know that husbands and wives should not fall out like children.

"Strike me, darling! Yes, and the babby too.

O, you should have heard the babby bawl as loud as me."

"Is not Dan very sorry?" asked Annie, coaxing the unfortunate infant.

"Is it sorry the ruffian would be? Not he; and why should he? 'Twas the spirits that made him a villain for the time; but he is the mildest husband of a noon-time that ever was seen. So, darling, don't you go and dream he isn't a good enough man for me. Heaven's blessing on him!—He never bothers me as your father would, Annie. We're just content, without all the measuring and building, and salting and packing, that you have to do at the father's bidding, my darling. What's all this trouble about now?"

Annie was too anxious to defend her father to answer the question immediately; so Noreen turned round to the little ones who were jumping from the ledges of rock.

"And what's all this trouble about, jewels?"

"The captain is coming! the captain is coming!" cried they.

"Is it the captain going to have a new house on Garveloch?" cried Noreen. "O Dan, up to the gentleman as soon as he comes, and get the money others got before you last time; and when ye get it, don't be making a beast of yourself or a martyr of the babby, but remember the rent, jewel."

Dan found it much easier to remember the rent than to pay it, and had rather give his wife a black eye in private than be lectured by her in public; and he therefore looked sulky and bade

her run after the captain if she chose, for that he would not bother himself for any reason in life. —Ella, who had overheard all, explained that there was no reason; as far as the captain was concerned; but that if Dan would bother himself to go out fishing, the rent would be no longer a trouble.

With all their recklessness and indolence, these people had pride; and when they heard that everybody was likely to prosper this summer, Noreen began to talk of holding up her head, as she had a right to do, equal to any of them that little thought what her relations were at Rathmullin.

Dan esteemed it mighty provoking that the bread was taken from within his teeth by them that were born to nothing but what they got with their dirty hands. If he had had a word with the captain as soon as others, he might have coaxed him into letting him have a boat; but it was always the way,—while he was content at home and just thinking of nothing at all, some vagabond or another stept into his shoes.

Ronald refrained from calling Dan to account for his term of abuse, knowing it to be in such frequent use in Ireland as to have lost much of its offensiveness. He assured Dan that the captain had work for everybody just now, and urged his making application to be hired without delay.

Murdoch stared with astonishment when he found that Angus was actually going to take down his curing-shed and remove it to the place where the stage was to be erected. It seemed to him as well as to Dan vastly too much trouble

and expense; but Angus had taken into account the damage the fish sustain by being much exposed and shifted about previous to curing; and he believed that the expedition and security with which the produce would be hauled up, prepared, and shipped again, would soon repay him for what he was about to do.

The business of months seemed to be transacted in Garveloch this afternoon, on the strength of the tidings which Ronald brought. All doubtful matters (except the one which most nearly concerned Ronald) were brought to a decision. Angus decided, as we have seen, on making a large venture of fixed capital. Farmer Duff decided on hiring some more labourers while there was any chance of his getting them. Fergus decided on offering the labour of his two eldest boys at the station, believing that there would be work for all, however young. More than a few parties decided that their courtship should end in immediate marriage, and never doubted the perfect propriety of making use of a season of prosperity for the purpose. Dan decided on putting his hand to the oar at last. All who wished to hire labour decided on looking abroad for labourers, and betimes, if they wished to make good terms. All who had labour to let began to consider how high they might venture to fix its price.

This was no deceitful promise of prosperity,—to those at least who did not expect too much from it. The sanguine and the ignorant, who are ever ready to take an ell where an inch is given, supposed that their island was enriched

for ever. They heard of wages rising higher and higher, and never suspected they might fall. They saw that the only thing at present wanted was a greater number of labourers, and imagined that when their tribes of children were grown up, all would be right,—wages as high, food as plentiful as now, and as great an increase of employment as there would be of labour. It was well that all did not keep up their expectations to this pitch,—that some were aware how precarious was the present prosperity. A single bad season, the opening of a few more fishing stations, a change in the diet of the West India slaves,—any one of these, or many other circumstances, might reduce the Garveloch fishery to what it had been; while the numbers of those who depended upon it for subsistence were increasing with a greater and a greater rapidity.

The least sanguine, however, could not resist the feeling of exhilaration excited by what passed before their eyes: nor was there any reason that they should. Prudence and foresight do not interfere with the rational enjoyment of blessings; they rather add to it by imparting a feeling of security. The youngest and giddiest could not relish more than Angus and his wife the freedom from care they now enjoyed, the sight of plenty around them, and the knowledge that none need be idle, none need be poor; and if these, the young and the giddy, bestowed little thought on the probable issue of their present state, and escaped the anxiety with which they ought to have regarded the future, neither

did they share the satisfaction of making provision for a season of storms.

The captain alighted in Garveloch, now and then, in his flight round the station. He was always in a prodigious bustle, and he made every body he met as fidgetty as himself about the impossibility of getting labourers enough for the work to be done. Wherever he went, it was suggested to him that people might be hired from some other place, from which other place he had just heard that there was also a deficiency of labour.

Some people thought they might be satisfied with having as large a trade as their numbers could manage; but the captain was not satisfied without taking all that offered. Men and their families were brought from a distance, all the boys that could handle an oar or help to draw a net received wages; all the girls assisted their mothers to cure; so that, at this time, the largest families were the richest. These circumstances acted as an encouragement, and the captain's sanguine expectation that the demand would continue operated as a direct bounty on population; and, in consequence, numbers increased in Garveloch as rapidly as in any new colony of a fertile country.

The seasons which are favourable to the fishery,—in respect of weather,—are favourable to the harvest also. Farmer Duff reaped abundant crops the next two seasons, which unusual abundance just served to feed his customers. What would have been done in case of an

average or an inferior crop having been yielded, few troubled themselves to determine. They had enough, and that was all they cared for.

Kenneth could not often be spared during these two seasons; but he came to attend the christening of a little brother and of two cousins. The only troubles he had to relate were of the difficulty of supplying the orders for barrels, and of the passion the captain was in when fish were spoiled for sale by being packed in old casks. The magistrate had the least to do of anybody. Hard times are the days of crime. There were still occasional quarrels; complaints of oppression on one side and sauciness on the other, and of a few acts of malice still perpetrated by people as stupid and helpless as Rob; but the crimes to which men are stimulated by want were not at present heard of. Were they over for ever?

Chapter VI.

A DREARY PROSPECT.

A TIME of leisure, as grievous to the most reckless and indolent as to the superior members of the society, came round ere long. First appeared hardship in the shape of an average crop; for the people having increased their consumption up to the amount of a remarkably abundant

harvest, were of course stinted when the soil yielded only the usual return. No very disastrous consequences followed at first. There was much complaint and a little dismay when it was found that supplies must not be looked for from the neighbouring districts, since there also the season had been only moderately favourable, and there were mouths enough to feed in each place to leave no supplies over for Garveloch. The Garveloch people therefore were obliged to eat some of their fish instead of selling it, and to pay a very high price for their barley and oatmeal. Those who were able to give this price were willing to do it, seeing that the rise of price was a necessary consequence of the comparative scarcity; that farmer Duff must pay himself for the outlay on his land, whether its produce were ample or scanty; and that its dearness alone could make the supply last till the next harvest came round. Those who were too poor to buy abused the farmer, saying that his crop was not scantier than it had been in many former years when he had sold it much cheaper, and that he was making use of a dispensation of Providence to fill his own pocket. They were slow to perceive that it was themselves and not the farmer who had made the change; that they had caused the increase of demand and the consequent rise of price.

It would have been well if nothing worse than the occurrence of an average season had happened. The number of people brought by a sudden demand for labour might have lessened

Some might have departed elsewhere, and others have devised plans for a new introduction or better economy of food; and after a short period of hardship, the demand for food might have gradually accommodated itself to the supply; for their society was not like the population of an overgrown district, where there may be mistakes in ascribing effects to causes, and where the blame of hardship may be laid in the wrong place. The people of Garveloch might survey their little district at a glance, and calculate the supply of provision grown, and count the numbers to be fed by it, and by this means discern, in ordinary circumstances, how they might best manage to proportion their resources of labour and food. But if any had endeavoured to do this, their expectations would have been baffled by the event, unless they had taken into the account the probability of bad seasons—a probability which the truly wise will never overlook.

A few seasons after the period of prosperity of which we have spoken, the dawn of a June morning broke as gloomily as if it had been November. Scudding clouds, from which came gushes of hail, swept over the sky and brushed the tallest points of rock as they passed. The wind came in gusts as chill as the wintry blasts, and before it the vexed ocean swelled and heaved, while its tumbling mass of waters seemed to forbid man to approach, much more to trust the frail workmanship of his hands to its overwhelming power. The night-light still glimmered from

some of the dwellings in Garveloch, the islands of the Sound were not yet visible from the heights, and the peaks of Lorn were but beginning to show themselves against the eastern sky, when Angus came out stealthily from his dwelling, softly closed the door, drew his plaid about him, and paced down to the beach. He was proceeding to get out his boat, when his son Kenneth approached.

"Father," said he, "you are not going to trust yourself at sea to-day?"

"Help must be had, Kenneth. I must cross at the risk of my own life, or more will be lost. I have here the last of my savings; and since money is worth no more than pebbles in Garveloch, I must carry it where it may buy us food."

"And my mother——"

"Your mother is in the inner room, where she has been up with Jamie all night. I heard him very loud just now. His fever runs high, so that she will not miss me perhaps for hours. She neither saw nor heard me come out.—Now, Kenneth, say nothing about going instead of me. You know that my experience of the sea is greater than yours, and the best skill is little enough for such a voyage as mine is like to be"

"But my mother must soon know," urged Kenneth.

"Surely. Tell her that I hope to be back to-morrow night, with that which may ease her nursing. Farewell, my boy."

Kenneth was a brave, high-spirited youth. His heart was full when he saw his father put off

among the stormy breakers, and he therefore said nothing. He helped to guide the boat to the last moment, wading as deep and struggling with the waves as long as he possibly could, till his father made a commanding sign that he should return. There was no use in speaking amidst the thunder of the waters. Kenneth wrung out his plaid, and climbing the rock, sat down, unheeding the wind, to watch his father's boat, scarcely visible in the grey light, as it won its weary way among the billows. Bitter thoughts rose fast within him;—his father in peril at sea; his mother worn with care and watching; his beloved little Jamie, the youngest of the large family, and their darling, sinking under the fever; all the others changing from what they had been, some in health, some in spirits, some in temper, and he unable to do anything to help them. Dismissed with others from the station because his labour was not now worth the food he consumed, he had come home to be, as he thought, a burden, but as his parents declared, a comfort, to his family amidst their cares, and daily looked round, and ever in vain, for some means of assisting them. As he now thought of the fruitlessness of all his efforts, tears rose and blinded him so that he could no longer discern any object at sea. As fast as he dashed them away they rose again, till he no longer resisted them, but let them flow as they had never flowed since childhood.

As he sat with his face hid in his plaid, he was roused by the pressure of his mother's hand upon

his shoulder. She had spoken from a distance, but the roaring of wind and waters and the screaming of sea-fowl were more powerful than her voice, and her appearance took Kenneth by surprise—a surprise at which she smiled.

"Mother!" he cried, as he started up, and a burning blush overspread his face; "if I were a good son, it would be my part to smile when I found you with sinking spirits."

Ella smiled again as she answered—

"And when my spirits sink, I will look to you for cheer. Meantime, never fancy that tears are unworthy a brave man, or always a sorrowful sight to a mother. It is God's will, Kenneth, that there is cause for tears; and since there is cause, it is no pain to me to see them fall. If God calls you and me hither to look out upon a second year's storms, he knows that it is as natural for the heart as for the cloud to drop its rain; and never think, my boy, that I shall be a harder judge than he."

"But what brought ye out, mother, so early, into the cold?"

"I came to seek the cooling wind. Jamie fell asleep, and Annie came to take her turn beside him; and finding Angus gone, and my head hot and weary, I thought I should find more rest on the rock than in my bed. I see the boat, Kenneth. I know your father's purpose, and I guess you were praying just now for his safe return."

"And, O mother! I had some distrustful thought in the midst of my prayer. If he should

not return, and even while he is gone, I can do nothing. Here I am, eating my daily portion, which I never helped to earn; being a burden when I thought—proud as I was—that I should be your main joy and help. O mother! this humbles one sadly. I never thought to be so humbled."

"Who that is humbled ever sees the stroke before it comes, Kenneth? Look round, and mark. Where many a smoke rose, only a short year since, from those cottages below, the fires are quenched, and with them is quenched the pride of those who revelled in plenty. Now, many are gone, and have left but four bare walls for us to remember them by. Some are gone to lie cold under yonder gray stones, and some few have found their way back over the sea. Those that remain have lost their pride: it was blown away with the cold ashes of their last fire; and it will not come back while they sit hungry and shivering. Which of these thought any more than you that they should be so humbled? When I gloried in my Jamie, as the brightest and handsomest of my children, I did not expect that he would be the first I should lay in the grave."

"Must he die, mother?"

"I take such to be God's will, Kenneth; but I once had a lesson, as you know, against reading his pleasure too readily. They that I thought lost came to dry land, and another lay under the water when I thought him safe on the hard rock. Since that day, I have ever waited for the issue;

and so I will now. We will hope that Jamie may live, and we will be ready to part with any who were but just now in life and strength."

"It is but little we know, indeed," replied Kenneth. "It seems but yesterday that yon sea was almost as busy as a thronged city, with a hundred vessels following the shoals, and then crowding homewards with a full cargo; and now this year and last, not a boat has gone out, not a gleam of sun, not a blink of moonlight has been upon the sea; and as to the land, it is more changed still. Where the barley-fields were as green as a rich pasture three years ago, there are only a few straggling blades, just enough to tempt a man with thoughts of what a harvest is. This is a change we little feared to see."

"And yet," said Ella, "many did foresee, and all might have foreseen. When was there ever a time that the seasons did not change? Here we have been too slow to learn God's will. We knew that the same storms that took away our occupation must cut off our harvest; we knew that such stormy seasons come from time to time; and yet we acted as if we were promised plenty for ever. Our children look up to us for food, because we have given them no warning that it should cease; and they are right. But if we look up to God in the same manner we are wrong; for the warning was given long ago."

"I have heard uncle Ronald speak of it," replied Kenneth. "He has often feared that scarcity would come; but he told me that father,

and widow Cuthbert, and the Duffs, would never be taken by surprise."

"If it had not been for our savings," replied Ella, "we should have had worse things to undergo than may be in store for us. Instead of trembling for Jamie, I might have been mourning the half of my children. Instead of grieving to see you wasting, Kenneth—how thin ye are grown!—I might have been——" She stopped.

"If I am thin, mother," Kenneth replied, "it is with care; and my care is that I can do nothing for bread for myself and you."

"I will take you at your word," replied his mother, with a smile. "We will try whether you will grow stouter for your conscience being at rest. But, mind, it shall be but a moderate trial, and I will share it with you."

Kenneth looked eagerly to his mother for an explanation of what was in her mind. Ella told him that there was positively no more grain to be bought before harvest. Farmer Duff had very wisely kept back enough for seed-corn, in case of the crop failing utterly, and had very reasonably laid up a sufficient store for his own household; and none was now left over. Ella's remaining store was not sufficient to afford even a stinted allowance to the whole family for the three months still to come; and she now, therefore, proposed that neither she nor her son should touch barley or oatmeal, but give up their share to the younger and tenderer members of the family.

Kenneth was grateful to his mother for her

confidence. She had hitherto concealed the fact of the supply being nearly exhausted, in the hope that Kenneth, like the rest, would eat and think little of the future; but she now saw that he would be made happier by being allowed to share her sacrifices, and she therefore called upon him to do so.

Kenneth was not yet satisfied. It was not enough to be permitted to save food; he must find out how to obtain it.

"Not enough!" exclaimed his mother, mournfully. "My boy, ye little know what it is, and ye never can till the trial is made. Ye little know what it is to lie down at night cold and aching, and to toss about unable to sleep, when sleep seems the one thing that would give ye ease, since ye cannot have food. Ye little think what sleep is when it comes,—how horrible fancies are ever rising up to steal away the sweetness of rest—how all that ye see and all that ye touch turns to food, and turns back again before ye can get it to your mouth; or, worse still, to fancy ye are driven by some evil power to strangle and devour whatever is most precious to you. Ye little think what it is to wake with a parched mouth and hands clenched, so that they are like an infant's all the day after, and the limbs trembling and the sight dim, as if fifty years had come over ye in a night. Ye little know, Kenneth, what it will be to loathe the food you and I shall have, and to see the thoughtless little ones crumbling the bannocks and eating them as if they were to be had as easily as the hailstones

that have beat down the crops. Wait a while, my boy, before you say all this is not enough."

"You know too well, mother, what it is. Can it be that you have been fasting alone already?"

"I learned all this," said Ella, evading the question, "when I was nearly as young as you. There was a scarcity then, and we had a sore struggle. My father was never well after that season. There was no need, thank God, to stint the lads as we stinted ourselves; and, as for me, the only harm," she continued, smiling, "was, that your father found me less comely when he came back than I had been when he went away. There is also this good,—that there is one among us who has gone through evil times, and knows how to abide them."

"Teach me, mother. How shall I get such food as we may live on?"

"There will be no positive want of food yet, my boy, though it will be such as will not nourish us like that we have been used to. We must try shell-fish, without bannocks or potatoes; merely shell-fish, day after day; and the strongest soon grow weak on such diet."

"I would rather give up my share, sometimes," said Kenneth, "than gather them at the cost of what I see. I have been glad you were at home when the tide went down, and I would not let the little ones come and help, lest they should learn to fight like the hungry people on the shore. Dan, that ever kept his eyes half-shut at noon, now watches the first falling of the water,

and bullies every one, if it be Noreen herself, that sees a shell before he snatches it."

"Their potatoes have not come up," observed Ella, "and they begin to be pinched the very first, because they had nothing to give for meal."

"And then," continued Kenneth, "the Murdochs have got the ill-will of all the neighbours, by their stripping every child they meet of whatever he may be carrying home. The very babies are learning to curse Meg Murdoch."

"And so you took their part," said Ella, smiling, "and let them strip you in turn. You are right not to let your little brothers go down with you to learn theft and covetousness; but you must not go on giving away your own share, now that you will have no bread at home."

"Then there are the fowl," said Kenneth. "They are not food for the delicate, to be sure, at this season; but we must try whether they will not nourish us till better days come. The worst of it is that very few are left, and those are the oldest and toughest."

"The neighbours that are poorer than we have been everywhere before us," said Ella. "But they are welcome. Since they trusted to chance, the first chances are their due. My eyes are dim with watching yon boat, and I can see nothing: is it still there, or has the mist come over it?"

Ella had scarcely withdrawn her gaze for a moment from her husband's struggle with the winds and waves. Kenneth, who had not thus

strained his sight, could just discern the speck rising and falling on the dreary waste of waters.

"I see her still winning her way, mother; but you will scarce make her out again."

"I will not try now, but go home."

"And to bed," said Kenneth. "You are weary and half-frozen, standing on this point as if ye came to meet the storm. Promise me you will rest, mother!"

"Perhaps I will if Jamie is still asleep. And do you hasten down, Kenneth, and gather whatever the tide may have thrown up. Now, don't part with all you get for your own share. I have called upon you for self-denial; and part of that self-denial must be not to give all the help you have been accustomed to yield."

"That is the worst part of it," said Kenneth; "but I remember, mother, that my first duty lies at home. O, if there were no hardship, how much less greedy and quarrelsome should we be! It is not in men's nature to quarrel for shell-fish every time the tide goes down."

"Remember," said Ella, "that better things also arise out of hardship. Do none learn patience? Do none practise self-denial?"

"But we have not known extreme hardship, mother."

"True. May the day never come when I shall see my children looking with jealousy upon one another! The jealousy of the starving is a fearful sight."

Kenneth's first trial of his new resolution awaited him when he went down to the shore to

gather shell-fish. His appearance was usually a signal for the children, who were driven away by some one of the tyrants of the neighbourhood, to come down and put themselves under his protection. They had learned to reckon on his share being divided among them; for, while there was food at home, he could not find in his heart to refuse the little half-starved creatures their piteous requests. One found that some of her pickings were mere empty shells; another pleaded that she had no breakfast on the mornings when it was her turn to look for fish; and another declared that his father would beat him if he did not carry home his bonnetful. One or all of these pleas usually emptied Kenneth's store. One set of claimants had never yet been refused,—his cousins. Fergus's two eldest boys, who had earned good wages, and hoped to earn them again when the fishery should be resumed, were thrown back on their own resources in the interval. It was melancholy to see them wandering about the island in search of anything that might be rendered eatable, and at times reduced to beg of their cousin Kenneth as many shell-fish as he could spare. Kenneth felt that nothing but absolute famine could drive him to deny them; and he was therefore glad to perceive that they were not on the shore this morning. He gave notice to the little ones, who now gathered about him, that he could henceforth only help them by defending their right to whatever they could pick up. He must share equally with them from this day, and he hoped they would not ask that which

he could no longer give. And now began the scenes which he was henceforth daily to witness among the children, and in time, upon a larger scale, among the parents. All the petty arts, all the violence, all the recklessness, to which the needy are tempted, began to show themselves first among those whose habits of self-control were weakest; and afforded a specimen of what might be looked for when the parents should be driven by want beyond the restraint of principles and habits which had been powerful in the absence of overwhelming temptation.

One of the little boys uplifted a vehement cry. "Willie has snatched my bonnet! O, my bonnet, my bonnet! It was fuller to-day than it has ever been yet."

"That is the very reason," cried Willie, a stout lad, who felt that he could carry everything among the little ones by strength of arm. "You never had enough before to make it worth while taking them. Now I have got them, I will keep them."

Kenneth, who was the representative of justice, struggled with Willie, and got back the property; but the lad vowed vengeance for his drubbing, especially against the complainant, who henceforth had no peace. All parties being left discontented, it was plainly a great evil that there had been temptation to recur to what Willie called the right of the strongest.

One of the little girls was found hidden behind a rock, eating all that had been collected for the family at home. Many cried "Shame!"

and vowed she should never again be trusted within reach of more than her own share; to which she answered, that she should eat when she was hungry, and that those who had enough might supply her brothers and sisters. This child would have had a rate levied upon all the more provident, for the relief of her fellow-paupers.

Two lads having quarrelled about the share due to one, the most hungry threw the whole back into the sea, by way of revenge as he declared. One would have thought he had heard Mr. Mackenzie speak of the possible, though extreme, case of men burning stacks because there was not enough corn.

Even this reckless boy was less provoking than one party, pre-eminent in poverty and dirt, who could not be persuaded to give over their sport, happen what might. They called together whatever animals could eat shell-fish, and put this food down the mouths of dogs and ponys,—both of which eat fish in the islands.

"How can you," said Kenneth, "bring more eaters down to the shore when we have too many already?"

"We must have our play," answered they. "Ours is the age for play, as we have heard our father say; and we are so cold and hungry almost all day, that it is very hard if we may not amuse ourselves when we can."

There was no use in pointing out to them that they were doing all they could to increase their own hunger; they only answered that they would

have their sport as long as they could get it, and immediately whistled for more dogs.

To judge by their acts, these children did not perceive that, though they could not determine the quantity of fish which should be within reach, it was their fault that the number of eaters was needlessly increased. The half-starved multitudes of an over-peopled kingdom might take a lesson from their folly.

"Can this be the place," thought Kenneth, "can these be the children, where and among whom there was so much cheerfulness but a few seasons ago? How happy we all used to be picking up our fish! And now, some still laugh louder than ever; but the mirth of the destitute is more painful to witness than the grave looks of those who have something left. O, for peace and plenty once more!"

Chapter VII.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE TEACHABLE.

As Ella slowly took her way homewards, she caught a glimpse of two men coming up the winding path she was descending. Forgetting the impossibility that Angus should be already returned, and seeing that one was Fergus, she supposed that her husband and brother were coming to meet her. On her turning a point,

they were in full view. It was Ronald instead of Angus. Terror seized the anxious wife, who was weakened by watching and care.

"O Angus, Angus!" she cried, in tones which made the rocks ring again. "O, he is lost, and ye are come to tell me!"

Before her brothers could reach her, she had sunk down, unable to keep her hold of the rock, while the earth seemed to swim round and quake beneath her. She was lost in a fainting-fit before a word of comfort could reach her ear.

"This must be fasting as well as care," said Ronald, as he chafed her hands, while Fergus sprinkled water over her face. "Never before was Ella seen to sink, much less upon a false alarm. It must be sore suffering that could bring her to this."

Fergus's tears were falling fast while he replied,—

"'Tis the parent's heart that suffers, Ronald. 'Tis for her little Jamie that she has watched and struggled till she faints, spirit and body together."

"She is coming round," said Ronald. "There is colour in her lips. Now see if her spirit does not rally as soon as her limbs, or sooner. She will be more surprised at herself than we are."

"Hush! she opened her eyes just now. Raise her a little more."

"Why, Ella," said Ronald, smiling, as he leaned over her, "ye never gave me such a greeting before. Why are ye so sorry to see me to-day?"

'Is nothing the matter?" asked Ella steadily "I dreamed there was;—something about Angus."

"It was only a dream, as far as I know. I have but just landed, and I came to you for news of Angus and all of you."

By this time Ella had started up, and refusing further assistance, supported herself by leaning against the rock.

"I thought Fergus looked sad, I thought he looked wretched," she continued, gazing wistfully into her younger brother's face.

"May be ye're right, Ella; but it was not for you. A man has enough to make him look grave in times like these. But I did not mean to frighten you."

"Times like these make us all selfish," said Ella, "and that is the worst of them. There was a time, Fergus, when I should have been quicker-sighted to your sorrow than my own.—But come with me to shelter before yon cloud bursts. I have been too long from my sick child already. Come with me both of ye, and take the poor welcome I can give. O, it is a comfort, Ronald, to see ye here!"

Her step was little less firm, as her brothers observed, than their own. At her own door she charged them to make no one uneasy by speaking of her fainting-fit. It was a strange fancy, she said, which would not come over her again.

"Mother, how white you look!" exclaimed Annie, as they entered.

"I am cold, my lass. The wind is piercing on the heights; so put some more peat to the fire, and see how you can make your uncles comfortable while I go to Jamie."

Jamie was still in his uneasy sleep. He lay on his back, his mouth open and parched, as if not a drop of liquid had ever touched his tongue, his breathing irregular, his bony fingers sometimes twitching, sometimes drooped with an appearance of utter helplessness. While his mother passed her hand over his temples, and watched his pulse and his countenance, she did not perceive that any one had followed her into the chamber. Presently she heard stifled sobs, and saw that Fergus was kneeling at the foot of the child's crib, hiding his face in his plaid.

"God help you! God comfort you!" she heard him say.

"You think he will die, Fergus; and you tremble for your own two sick children. But hope—at least till you see them as ill as Jamie. I have hoped till now."

Fergus's grief became more violent. His two infants had died in the night. The fever had made quicker work where its victims were already weakened by want. Fergus came to bid his brothers to the funeral.

Ella led him out of the chamber, and placed herself by him, but so that she could see all that passed by her child's bedside. She was more than ever thankful that Ronald had come, when he succeeded in gaining Fergus's attention to

what he had to say on the present state of affairs.

He could give little comfort about the prospect of an early supply of grain from the neighbouring islands, as there was a nearly equal degree of distress throughout. The season that was unfavourable to one, was so to all; and the same causes which stopped the fishery laid waste the land. But though immediate relief was not to be looked for, it was hoped that help was on the way. Memorials to government had been sent from the different stations, and Captain Forbes was now making a circuit of the islands in order to estimate the degrees of distress, and to judge how best to apply the funds the Company proposed to set apart for the relief of the inhabitants. He would soon be in Garveloch, and presently after it was possible a vessel might arrive with pease, potatoes, or grain. Ronald had no sooner heard of this prospect of relief than he made his way over the stormy sea to cheer his sister and brother with the news. There was doubtless another, Ella observed, whom he would wish to tell, though she was thankful to say that widow Cuthbert suffered less from the pressure of the times than any family in Garveloch, unless it was the Duffs.

Ronald took no notice of this at present; he reserved what he had to say about Katie till Fergus should be gone; and proceeded to explain that he had endeavoured in vain to make a purchase of meal that he might bring with him.

There was none to be had for love or money But as those who could pay best were served first, he had received a promise that he should purchase a portion of the first cargo that passed the station. He desired that it might be equally divided between the families of his sister, his brother, and the widow Cuthbert, and that some one should be on the watch to secure the package addressed to Fergus, as soon as the sloop should approach. Before he even thanked his brother, Fergus anxiously inquired when the supply would come? There was no knowing. It might be a fortnight; it might be two months. He did feel and express himself grateful, however, and said something, to which Ronald would not listen, about repaying, in happier days, that part of the debt which could be repaid, and then rose to go and tell his wife that food was or would be on the way. Ronald called him back as he was going out at the door, to entreat that he would never revive the subject of payment.

"I have only myself to work and care for," he said, "and whatever is left over is the natural portion of my kindred. You would inherit it at my death, you know, Fergus; and it is only putting it into your hands when you really want it, instead of waiting till it might be less acceptable to you and yours."

Upon this ensued, as soon as Ronald and his sister were quite alone, a conversation relating to the widow Cuthbert. It was long and earnest, and interrupted only by the attentions necessary

to the little patient. The child, on waking, knew his uncle Ronald, and submitted to be soothed and quieted by him while Ella sat spinning beside the crib.

They were thus engaged in the afternoon when Katie entered. She brought a nourishing mess for little Jamie, as she had done more than once before since his illness began. She was surprised to see Ronald, for visitors were rare in such a season of storms. She declared herself vexed at having entered without warning, when she saw him preparing for immediate departure; but he said he must be at the station before night, and had remained too long already; and as his sister did not press his stay, Katie said no more about it, but took his offered hand, and cheerfully confirmed what Ella had told him of the health and comfort of her family. There was no need to ask after her own, for she looked, perhaps from the force of contrast with every body else, more fresh in health and easy in spirits than in many former days when less care prevailed.

"Go, my dears," said Ella to the children in the outer room, "and help your uncle with his boat, and then ye can watch him away round the point; and mind ye mark whether any other vessel is in sight. And yet Angus said he should not be back this day."

"And now," said Katie, when she had done watching how her friend coaxed little Jamie into swallowing the food she brought, "you must let

me have my own way entirely, Ella; for you know me for a wilful woman"

"Let me hear your will before I promise, Katie."

"My will is to change house and family with you to-night. You must put my children to bed for me, and eat my supper, which you will find in the cupboard, and then lie down in my bed, and sleep till the sun is high. You can trust me to nurse Jamie, I know, from what you said when my Hugh struggled through the measles; and you may quite depend on it, Kenneth says, that your husband will not return to-night."

Ella had no foolish scruples about accepting this neighbourly offer. She had watched many nights, and was so nearly exhausted, that this was a very seasonable help, she thought, to the better performance of her duties the next day. She had been ever ready to give similar assistance to her neighbours in like cases; and knowing the pleasure of doing friendly acts, she would not refuse it to Katie. She therefore agreed at once, adding,—

"I am sure you would not offer this if you had any fear of your children taking the fever from me or you."

"Certainly not, Ella. You know nobody was more careful than I when the small-pox was in the island; and I offended several neighbours by not letting my children so much as speak with theirs; but this kind of fever is not given and taken, as I have good reason to be sure."

In a little while, seeing that Ella was moving about as if to prepare for her comfort during the evening and night, she called her to come and sit down, and not trouble herself with any more cares this day.

"That which will do for you," she said, "will do for me; and if I want anything, there will be Annie to tell me where to find it."

"I'm willing enough to sit down with ye," said Ella, when she had fed the fire, and resumed her spinning, "because——"

"Because you cannot stand; is not that it, Ella? You still look as white as if you had seen a ghost. So you took Ronald for a ghost this morning?"

"Fergus should not have told you that silly story. No; I am willing to be alone with you, because I have much to say about Ronald. You need never more look as you do now, Katie. I am going to lay a different plea before you this day; and if ye will grant it, it will be my last."

Katie bent over her work, and made no reply; so Ella proceeded.

"You know as well as I how long Ronald has loved you, and how sore a struggle your marriage was to him, and that there have been times since when he has hoped; but you have never known, as I have, how tossed in mind he has been for more than three years past. He has come and gone, and come again, Katie, watching your feelings, and waiting for what he thought your pleasure, till he often lost all power

of judging what he should do, and how he should speak to you."

"I am sure," said Katie, "it was as far from my wish as from my knowledge that his mind should be so tossed. I never willingly left any one in uncertainty, and I have far too much respect for Ronald, far too much——"

"Neither he nor I ever had such a thought, Katie, as that ye would trifle with him or any man. If he had, ye would soon have seen an end of his love. The uncertainty was no fault of yours, and it was only from particular causes that it lasted so long. He has said many a time that if you had been a young girl, he would have spoken out and known your mind at once; but your husband was his friend, and there was no measuring what your feelings might be now, and he feared above all things wounding them; and so he lingered and lingered and never spoke, till circumstances have decided the matter he could not decide for himself. He wishes you to know, Katie, that you may lay aside all fear of him. He gives you his word of honour he will never sue you; and if, as he suspects, he has occasioned you uneasiness, he entreats your pardon, and hopes you will dismiss it all from your mind."

"Is this the plea you spoke of?" asked Katie.

"No; the plea I spoke of may be, perhaps, more easily granted. Let me entreat for him that you will regard him freely as an old friend, as a brother. He will think no more of mar-

riage; and I know nothing would make him so happy as being able to watch over and help us all equally. Your children love him, Katie; and if you will only do as I do, give him a welcome when he comes and a blessing when he departs, and ask him for aid, and take what he offers, and let him keep watch upon your children for their good, there may be an end of all difficulty, and my brother may be happier than he has been for many a year. It will ever be painful to be like strangers or common acquaintance; and you have his word of honour,—and whose word is so sure?—that he will not seek to be more than friend; the only way for his peace and your ease is to be really friends,—as if ye were both the children of the same parents. Let Ronald be your friend as he is mine."

"I am not aware," said Katie, "of either act or word which need make me scruple to give and take friendship in the way you wish. But, Ella, you must answer me one question plainly; is it anything in myself which made Ronald change his views? I should not have asked this if you had not said that he gave up marriage altogether; but since I know that his thoughts are not turning upon any one else, I should like to be told whether he has less esteem for me than before I married?"

"If he had, would he seek your friendship as he does? If he esteemed or thought he ever should esteem you less, he would just keep away from Garveloch, and tell nobody why, unless

perhaps myself. No; he feels as he ever did; and lest you should doubt me, I will tell you all I know of his conscience and his judgment on this matter. It is the state of society in the islands, Katie, that makes him and other thoughtful men give up the intention of marrying."

"And some that are not thoughtful too, Ella. I could tell you of more than one that would fain have had me when there was prospect that my boys would be a little fortune to me,—I mean when labour was scarce,—that have now slunk away, and will never hold out a hand to me again, I dare say, till my family promise to be a profit instead of a burden.'

"You do not take Ronald to be one of these!" cried Ella indignantly. "You cannot think that he is one to come forward and go back as your fortune waxes and wanes, whether that fortune be your children or your savings! It is not for himself only, but for you and your children, and for us and for society, that he thinks and acts as he does."

Katie did not doubt it.—Ronald was far from selfish.

"If all was bright with us again in a single month," said Ella, "he would keep in the same mind; for he sees that prosperity can never last long among us, while we make no provision against the changes that must ever befall, while seasons are sometimes stormy and our commerce liable to variations. We have made an abundant season and a brisk demand into curses, by acting

as if they were always to last; and now we want many such as he to soften our miseries, which he could not do if he were burdened like us."

"But it is hard," observed Katie, "that he must deny himself because his neighbours are imprudent."

"Yet his lot is best, Katie. It is sweet to him to help us in our need; and he is spared the sorrow of seeing his little ones pine for that which he cannot give. Yet he cannot but feel that he bears more than his share in giving up marriage altogether. If there were no O'Rorys to marry at eighteen, and if most others had the prudence to wait some years longer than they do, all who wish might marry and deserve no blame."

"But who thinks of praise or blame about the act of marrying?" said Katie. "I own that they ought. When one looks round and sees how sin and sorrow grow where hunger prevails, one cannot think any man guiltless who overlooks the chance of his increasing the poverty of society. But how few consider this! Those who think themselves conscientious, go no farther than to consider whether they are marrying the right person. They spend no thought on the time and the manner, or on their duty to society.

"It is so even here," said Ella, "where we can trace the causes of distress: and in great cities, where it is easy to lay the blame in the wrong place, and where the people become the more reckless the poorer they grow, the evil is

much greater. There children are born whose youthful parents have neither roofs to shelter, nor clothes to cover them; and the more widely poverty spreads through the multitude of labourers, the faster is that multitude doubled. You have seen enough of cities, Katie, to know that this is true."

"Yes; and all this is done in the name of Providence. I always expected next to hear Providence blamed for not giving food enough for all this multitude."

"Such blame would have been as reasonable as the excuse," said Ella. "But how slow we are to learn the will of Providence in this case, when it is the very same that we understand in other cases! Providence gave us strength of limbs and of passions: yet these we restrain for the sake of living in society. If a man used his hands to pull down his neighbour's house, or his passion of anger to disturb the society in which he lives, we should think it no excuse that Providence had given him his natural powers, or made him enjoy their exercise. How is it more excusable for a man to bring children into the world, when there are so many to be fed that every one that is born must help to starve one already living?"

"Since Providence has not made food increase as men increase," said Katie, "it is plain that Providence wills restraint here as in the case of other passions."

"And awful are the tokens of its pleasure, Katie. The tears of mothers over their dead

children, that shrunk under poverty like blossoms withering before the frosts, the fading of the weak, the wasting of the strong, thefts in the streets, sickness in the houses, funerals by the wayside—these are the tokens that unlimited increase is not God's will."

"These tell us where we are wrong, Ella. How shall we learn how we may be right?"

"By doing as you have done through life, Katie; by using our judgment, and such power as we have. We have not the power of increasing food as fast as our numbers may increase; but we have the power of limiting our numbers to agree with the supply of food. This is the gentle check which is put into our own hands; and if we will not use it, we must not repine if harsher checks follow. If the passionate man will not restrain his anger, he must expect punishment at the hands of him whom he has injured; and if he imprudently indulges his love, he must not complain when poverty, disease, and death lay waste his family."

"Do not you think, Ella, that there are more parties to a marriage than is commonly supposed?"

"There is a party," replied Ella, smiling, "that if it could be present, would often forbid the banns; and it is this party that Ronald has now consulted."

"You mean society."

"Yes. In savage life, marriage may be a contract between a man and woman only, for their mutual pleasure; but if they lay claim to

the protection and advantages of society, they are responsible to society. They have no right to provide for a diminution of its resources; and therefore, when they marry, they form a tacit contract with society to bring no members into it who shall not be provided for, by their own labour or that of their parents. No man is a good citizen who runs the risk of throwing the maintenance of his children on others."

"Ah, Ella! did you consider this before your ten children were born?"

"Indeed, Katie, there seemed no doubt to my husband and me that our children would be well provided for. There were then few labourers in Garveloch, and a prospect of abundant provision; and even now we are not in poverty. We have money, clothes, and furniture; and that we have not food enough is owing to those who, having saved nothing, are now far more distressed than we are. Let us hope that all will take warning. My husband and I shall be careful to teach those of our children who are spared to us how much easier it is to prevent want than to endure it."

"You and I will do what we can, Ella, to make our children prudent in marriage; and if all our neighbours would do the same, we might look forward cheerfully. But so few take warning! And it is so discouraging to the prudent to find themselves left almost alone!"

"Nay, Katie; it is not as if all must work together to do any good. Every prudent man, like Ronald, not only prevents a large increase

of mischief, but, by increasing capital, does a positive good. Every such act of restraint tells; every such wise resolution stops one drain on the resources of society. Surely this knowledge affords grounds for a conscientious man to act upon, without doubt and discouragement."

"How differently is honour imputed in different times!" said Katie, smiling. "The times have been when they who had brought the most children into the world were thought the greatest benefactors of society; and now we are honouring those most who have none. Yet both may have been right in their time."

"A change of place serves the same purpose as change of time," replied Ella. "If Ronald were in a new colony, where labour was more in request than anything else, he would be honoured for having ten children, and doubly honoured for having twenty. And reasonably too; for, in such a case, children would be a gift, and not a burden to society."

"It is a pity, Ella, that all should not go there who are too poor to marry properly, and have no relish for the honour of a single life. Dan and his wife would be a treasure to a new colony."

"If they and their children would work, Katie; not otherwise. But the poor little things would have a better chance of life there. If Noreen stays here, she may be too like many a Highland mother;—she may tell of her twenty children, and leave but one or two behind her."

"My heart aches for those poor infants," said

Katie. "One would almost as soon hear that they were put out of the way at their birth, as see them dwindle away and drop into their little graves one after another, before they are four years old. I have often heard that neither the very rich nor the very poor leave such large families behind them as the middling classes; and if the reason is known, it seems to me very like murder not to prevent it."

"The reasons are well known, Katie. Those who live in luxury and dissipation have fewer children born to them than any class; but those that are born are guarded from the wants and diseases which cut off the families of the very poor. The middling classes are more prudent than the lowest, and have therefore fewer children than they, though more than the luxurious; and they rear a much larger proportion than either."

"One might look far, Ella, among the lords and ladies in London, or among the poor Paisley weavers, before one would find such a healthy, hearty tribe——"

"As yours," Katie would have said; but seeing Ella look upon her little Jamie with a deep sigh, she stopped short, but presently went on—

"It seems to me that a lady of fashion, who gives up her natural rest for feasting and playing cards all night long in a hot room, and lets herself be driven about in a close carriage instead of taking the air on her own limbs, can have no more wish to rear a large healthy family than

Noreen, who lets her babe dangle as if she meant to break its back, and gives the poor thing nothing but potatoes, when it ought to be nourished with the best of milk and wholesome bread. Both are little better than the mothers in China. O Ella! did your husband ever tell you of the children in China?"

"Yes, but I scarcely believed even his word for it. Who told you?"

"I have read it in more books than one; and I know that the same thing is done in India; so I am afraid it is all too true. In India it is a very common thing for female children to be destroyed as soon as born."

"The temptation is strong, Katie, where the people are so poor that many hundred thousand at a time die of famine. But child murder is yet more common in China, where no punishment follows, and nothing can exceed the distress for food. In great cities, new-born babes are nightly laid in the streets to perish, and many more are thrown into the river, and carried away before their parents' eyes."

"It is even said, Ella that there are persons whose regular business it is to drown infants like puppies."

"O horrible! And how far must people be corrupted before they would bear children to meet such a fate!"

"There is nothing so corrupting as poverty, Ella; and there is no poverty like that of the Chinese."

"And yet China is called the richest country in the world."

"And so it may be. It may produce more food in proportion to its bounds—it may contain more wealth of every sort than any country in the world, and may at the same time contain more paupers. We call newly-settled countries poor countries because they contain comparatively little capital; but the happiness of the people does not depend on the total amount of wealth, but on its proportion to those who are to enjoy it. What country was ever poorer than Garveloch twenty years ago? Yet nobody was in want. What country is so rich as China at this day? Yet there multitudes eat putrid dogs and cats, and live in boats for want of a house, and follow the English ships, to pick up and devour the most disgusting garbage that they throw overboard."

"Suppose such should be the lot of our native kingdom," said Ella, shuddering. "Such is the natural course of things when a nation multiplies its numbers without a corresponding increase of food. May it be given to all to see this before we reach the pass of the Chinese!—and even if we never reach it—if, as is more likely, the evil is palliated by the caution of the prudent, by the emigration of the enterprising, and by other means which may yet remain, may we learn to use them before we are driven to it by famine and disease!"

"It is fearful enough, Ella, to witness what is daily before our eyes. God forbid that the whole kingdom should be in the state that Garveloch is in now!"

" In very many towns, Katie, there is always distress as great as our neighbours' now; and so there will be till they that hold the power in their own hands—not the king, not the parliament, not the rich only, but the body of the people, understand those natural laws by which and under which they subsist."

Many would be of Ella's opinion, if they could, like her, see the operation of the principle of increase within narrow bounds; for nothing can be plainer, nothing more indisputable when fully understood. In large societies, the mind of the observer is perplexed by the movements around him. The comings and goings, the births, deaths, and accidents, defy his calculations; and there are always persons at hand who help to delude him by talking in a strain which would have suited the olden time, but which is very inappropriate to the present state of things. In every city, however crowded with a half-starved population, there are many more who do their utmost to encourage population than can give a sound reason for their doing so; and while their advice is ringing in the ears, and their example is before the eyes, and there is no lack of inaccurate explanations why our workhouses are overflowing, our hospitals thronged, and our funeral bells for ever tolling, it is difficult to ascertain the real state of the case. But when the observation is exercised within a narrow range, the truth becomes immediately apparent,—it becomes evident that since capital increases in a slower ratio than population, there

will be sooner or later a deficiency of food, unless the more vigorous principle of increase be controlled. If the welfare of a nation depended on the hare not reaching the goal before the tortoise, there might be some who would insist till the last moment that they moved at an equal pace, and ought, therefore, to be let alone; but there would be some who, trusting to their own eyes, would take precautionary measures: they might let the hare run till she overtook the tortoise, but then they would put on a clog. If any complain that this is not a fair race, the answer is that the hare and the tortoise were not made to vie with each other in speed; and if we set them to do it, we must manage the competition with a view to the consequences.

Ella and Katie, sensible and unprejudiced, and rendered quick-sighted by anxiety for their children, were peculiarly qualified for seeing the truth when fairly placed before them. Their interest in Ronald, as well as in their own offspring, gave them a view of both sides of the question; and there remained not a doubt, after calculating numbers and resources, that there must be some check to the increase of the people, and that the prudential check is infinitely preferable to those of vice and misery.

Of the griefs attending the latter, Ella could form some idea—though her feelings were not embittered by self-reproach—when she looked in the face of her sick child, who was now resting his aching head on her bosom. She could not leave him, though it was growing late, till

he closed his heavy eyes, and let her lay him on his pillow. Then Annie came to bear the widow company for an hour or two; and Ella went to pass the night in her friend's dwelling.

"We shall never have any reserves in our confidence henceforth, Ella," said Katie, smiling. "There has been but one subject on which I was not always glad to hear you speak; and now that one is settled for ever."

Ella was glad that Katie had thus spoken, for she had not been perfectly sure of her friend's state of feeling. She now gazed affectionately on that youthful face, touched but not withered by early sorrow, and kissed the forehead of the friend she loved like a younger sister, and whom she could not have regarded as such more tenderly if they had been made sisters by marriage.

Chapter VIII.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE UNTEACHABLE

Angus was restored safe to his home; but his return was melancholy enough. He was blown over the Sound by a storm, and landed at the moment that the funeral train who bore the bodies of Fergus's two children were winding up the rocks to the burial-place. The anxious father was naturally possessed with the idea that this

was the funeral of the child he had left so ill; and he was confirmed in the supposition by seeing none of his family on the beach to await his arrival. Kenneth and his brothers were among the mourners, and Angus therefore found his wife and the girls alone when, with a throbbing heart, he entered his own dwelling. Ella met him with a calm but sad countenance, which, together with the silent awe with which the children looked up to him, answered but too plainly the question he would have asked. Little Jamie had died a few hours before in his mother's arms. The last words he spoke had been to call for his father.

"O, why was I not here?" exclaimed the mourning parent, laying his cheek to that of his boy, as if the cold body could be conscious of the caress. "It must have been an evil spirit that decoyed me away."

"Alas, then, your voyage has been in vain!" said Ella. "You have brought no bread."

Angus shook his head mournfully, and cast down the pouch of useless money that came back as full as it went out. The scarcity extended through all the neighbourhood, and no food was to be bought at any price. Ella saw her husband's look of despondency, and rallied. She reminded him that they had a stock of meal, though a scanty one, and she held out the hope, suggested by Ronald's information, that a sloop would soon arrive with food enough to afford a temporary supply to all the inhabitants.

It had been agreed between Fergus and his

sister that a constant watch for this vessel should be kept from daybreak till dark by the elder children of each family. Annie was now at the post in the absence of Kenneth, and Ella tempted her husband out with her, to pronounce whether the look-out was well chosen. She saw that his grief was too new to allow him to receive the condolence of neighbours who might step in on their return from the funeral. She was glad she had done so when she saw Annie putting back the hair which the stormy wind blew over her face, and evidently straining her sight to discern some object at sea. Angus had his glass with him, and in the intervals of the driving mists, he plainly perceived a sloop coming up from the south.

"Away with you, with me for your helper!" cried Ella. "We will be at sea before any one knows what is coming; and then we shall escape contention, and the sight of contention. And you, Annie, tell none but your uncle and Kenneth where we are gone. If it should not be the right sloop, it would be cruel to raise false hopes."

"Besides, mother, the people would tear ye to pieces, or at least the boat—they are grown so savage."

"They would very likely fancy we were going to snatch their share, instead of to receive a regular purchase. Farewell, my lass," she continued, as they reached the boat; "Kenneth will soon be with you, and ye may give us a smile when we land, if yon be the vessel we take her for."

"But, O father, the squalls are so rough! I fear to let you go."

"Never fear, Annie. The Flora knows the greeting of a summer squall. She will win her way out hardly enough; but you will see her bounding back as if she was racing with the gale."

There were many loungers on the beach when Angus and Ella cleared out. Some were invalids, who could not be kept within their cheerless homes even by the chill and boisterous weather. Many were idlers; and all made sport of what they thought the useless toil of going to sea at such a time. Their jokes would have been painful and perhaps irritating to Angus if he had not had reason to hope that relief was on the way to himself and them.

"Did ye bring home such a cargo this morning that ye are tempted to try your luck again?" cried one.

"Make haste!" exclaimed another, "or ye'll scarcely find the shoal. It's a brave summer day for casting a net."

"Or for angling," observed a third. "Where are your lines, neighbour? Nothing like a smooth sea for ladies' fishing."

"Ye must treat us each with a supper when you come back, Angus," said a fourth, "unless indeed the fishes should make a supper of you."

"I trust there may be a supper for every one in Garveloch this night," observed Ella, as the final shout reached the rolling and pitching vessel; and these cheering words were the last she

she spoke, as all her husband's attention and her own was required to direct their rough and somewhat perilous course.

Never was such a commotion excited in Garveloch as upon the spread of the tidings that a vessel had arrived at the quay with a certain quantity of grain and an ample supply of pease. The eagle was startled from her nest by the uproar. The more shrill grew the blast, the louder rose the voices; the higher swelled the tide over the bar, the greater was the eagerness to cross it as the shortest way to the quay. The men sent their wives home for whatever little wealth they had to offer in exchange, in case the food was to be purchased and not given, while they themselves hastened to secure the point whence they might best bid or entreat. Here a poor invalid, putting forth his utmost power to keep up with his competitors, was jostled aside or thrown down by the passers by. There a band of children were beginning a noisy rejoicing for they scarcely knew what; some among them half-crying in the midst of their shouting from hunger and pain, which would not be forgotten. The only quiet people in the island were Angus's family, and their ill-thriving neighbours round the point.

When the Flora, dimly seen in the twilight, came bounding in as her master had foretold, no one awaited her on the beach but those who had watched the whole expedition, Fergus, Kenneth, and his sister. The expected supply of meal was safe, and Fergus lost no time in

conveying it out of sight, and into a place of safety.

"I brought down the money, father," said Kenneth, producing the pouch, "that you might buy more at the quay, if you wish it, before it is all gone."

"No, my boy," said Angus. "We have enough for the present, and I will neither take what others want more than we, nor raise the price by increasing the demand.'

The Murdochs and O'Rorys were the last to know what had happened, as little was heard of the tumult beyond the point. They were extremely and almost equally wretched, and were far from attempting to soften their distresses by sympathy and neighbourly offices. Those who are most heedless of adversity in prospect, do not usually bear it best when it comes; and so it proved in the instance of both these families. Murdoch, who, when he might have been prosperous, was too lazy to do more than trust he should get through well enough, now cast all the blame of his destitution on Dan's assurances that it would be the easiest thing in life to live, if he would only grow potatoes. Dan, who was content any way when causes of discontent were only in prospect, forgot there was such a thing as content when the natural consequences of his recklessness came upon him. It had been a terrible day when the absolute want of food had driven both to dig up their seed potatoes. Murdoch had foresight enough to be appalled at the prospect of the long destitution which this mea-

sure must cause. Dan laughed at him for supposing that anything better could be done in a season so wet that every root would rot in the ground instead of growing; but he did not the less grumble at "the powers" for giving him nothing better to eat than half-rotten roots, that afforded no more strength than his own puny infant had and was losing day by day. Noreen often looked rueful with two black eyes, and did not insist so vehemently as formerly on her Dan being "the beautifullest husband in nature;" and as for the child, its best friends could only hope it would follow Noreen's former dangling "babbies," and be laid in peace under the sod.

The first news these neighbours had of the arrival of the vessel from the station was from Kenneth, who goodnaturedly remembered to run and give them the information in time to afford them a fair chance in the scramble. Murdoch seized his staff and was off in an instant.

"Stay, neighbour," cried Kenneth, who was not aware of the extent of Murdoch's poverty; "the buyers have the first chance you know. Better not go empty-handed."

Murdoch thought he was jeering, and shook his stick at him with a gesture of passion, which Kenneth could not resent when he saw how the old man's limbs shook, and how vain were his attempts at unusual speed.

Dan jumped up at the news, snatched his baby, and gave it a toss which was enough to shake its weak frame to pieces, seized upon Noreen for a kiss in answer to the shriek with

which she received the child, snatched the pot in which the last batch of rotten potatoes was boiling, and threw out its contents into the puddle beside the door, and ran off, laughing at his wife's lamentations for the only bit of food she had had to put between her teeth this day. Kenneth now perceived that Dan could bestir himself upon occasion; and indeed the Irishman's glee was so obstreperous, that it might have been supposed his mirth was owing to his favourite "sperits," if it had not been known that he had been long without the means of procuring himself that indulgence.

Such a man's mirth is easily turned to rage. On reaching the sloop, which was fast emptying of its contents, Dan found that he stood a worse chance of a supply than anybody in Garveloch, except Murdoch, who still lagged behind. To come empty-handed and to come late was a double disqualification; and to be kept at a distance by force put Dan into a passion which was only equalled by his neighbour's, when he also arrived at the scene of action. It was the policy of the bystanders to turn their rage upon each other. As soon as an opening appeared among the group on the quay, through which the sloop might be approached, they pushed the old man forward, and held Dan back, urging that a hearty youth like him, and a stranger, would not surely force his way before an old man, who had been born and bred in the place; but Dan kicked, struggled, dealt his blows right and left, and at last sprang upon Murdoch, snatched off

his bonnet, and buffeted him about the face with it.

"You graceless wretch!" exclaimed all who were at leisure to look on.

"Let him uncover gray hairs that helped to make them gray," said Murdoch, in a voice of forced calmness. "It was he that lured me to poverty, and now let him glory in it."

"It's owing to your gray hairs I did not beat you blind this minute," cried Dan. "I'd have you keep a civil tongue in your head, if you'd have your eyes stay there too."

"I would peril my eyes to say it again," cried the old man. "It was you that lured me to poverty with saying that Ireland was the brightest and merriest land under the sun, and the only country where a man may live and be content without trouble."

"By the holy poker, so it is, barring such reprobates as you are in it."

"You told me that I spent my labour for nothing, and worse than nothing, when I grew oats and barley. You told me that I might get three times as much food out of the ground, by growing potatoes instead. You——"

"All true, by the saints, villain as you are to doubt my word! There's three times the victuals in an Irishman's field, and three times the childer in his cabin, and three times the people on the face of the blessed land, that there is where the folks are so mighty high that they must have bread."

"And three times the number die," said a voice near, "when a bad season comes."

"And what if they do?" cried Dan: "'tis a blessed land for all that, with a golden sun to live under, and a green turf to lie under."

"It's a vile country," cried Murdoch, emboldened by hope of support from the bystanders. "Yöör children are as hungry as cannibals, and as naked as savages. When the sun shines, you thank the powers and lie still in your laziness——"

"There's reason for that," interrupted Dan. "There are so many to do the work, we can't settle who is to begin; and so we're content to take no trouble; and this is the most your Rob and Meg have learned of me."

"And then when there comes a blank harvest, you fight over one another's graves."

"Sure the powers forgive the sin," cried Dan. "Craving stomachs drive to blows, and then the priest is merciful."

"More merciful than you are to one another when the fever comes, cruel savages as you are! If your own mother took the fever, you would turn her into a shed by the road side, and let her tend herself. You would go quietly smoking your pipe past the very place where your own father lay dying, and never speak a word or move a finger for him."

"'Tis false as to not speaking a word. We pray for them in the fever day and night; and many's the mass I have vowed against I grow

richer. The fever is a judgment of Heaven, and where is the good of catching it if we can help it? They that sent it will take care of them that have it, and what is our care to theirs?"

"Shame! shame!" was the cry from all sides; and some who were on their way home with a pan full of meal or a basket full of pease, stopped to listen why.

"Shame! shame!" cried Dan, mimicking the shouters. "You just don't know what you're talking about; for them that have the fever don't cry shame."

"Not in their hearts?"

"Never a bit;—and don't I know that had an uncle in the fever twice, and moved him for fear we should fall down in it too? Didn't he come crawling out the first time when we were bringing a coffin and supposing him dead, and did not he help the wail for himself before we saw him among us? and would he have wailed in a joke, if he had cried 'Shame!' in his heart? and who such a judge as himself?"

"What happened the next time, Dan?"

"The next time 'twas his ghost in earnest that went to the burial; and a pretty burial it was. O, there's no place like old Ireland for care of the dead! We beat you there entirely, you unnatural ruffians, that never give so much as a howl to your nearest flesh and blood!"

The listeners thought it better and more natural to help the living than to honour the dead. It did not seem to occur to either party that it was possible to do both. The dispute now ran

higher than ever, Murdoch laying the blame on Dan of having made all his resources depend on a favourable season, and Dan defending everything Irish, down to poverty, famines, and pestilential fevers; the first a perpetual, and each of the others a frequent evil. A fight was beginning, when order was restored by an authority which might not be resisted. Mr. Mackenzie was on board, having taken this opportunity of visiting several islands which were under his charge as a magistrate. Seeing the uproar on the quay likely to increase every moment, he stepped on shore, ordered two or three stout men to part the combatants, and gave poor old Murdoch into the care of Angus, who was standing by, desiring that his wants should be supplied, and that he should be sent home out of the reach of provocation from Dan. Angus looked kindly after the interests of his old master, now so humbled as not to resist his help; and then sent a neighbour with him to guard him from robbery on his way home. It might have been thought that Rob would have been the fittest person to undertake this natural duty; but Rob was nowhere to be seen. He had appeared one of the first on the quay, and had bought a supply of food with a little silver crucifix which he had contrived to steal from Noreen, and which she had kept, through all her distresses, as a sort of charm. Rob was now hidden in a snug corner, eating a portion of his provision, and drinking the whiskey for which he had exchanged the rest.

Mr. Mackenzie accepted Angus's invitation to spend the night under his roof. He agreed all the more readily from perceiving that he could gratify the feelings of the parents by taking part in the funeral of their child the next day; by carrying his head to the grave, as the expression is.

Mr. Mackenzie would know from Angus all that he could tell of Murdoch's history, and of what had happened to Dan since he settled in Garveloch. The present state of the island was a subject which always made Angus melancholy. The place was so changed, he said; there were many people that you would scarcely believe to be the same as before their distresses began.

"Such is always the case, Angus, where there are more people than can live without jostling. People act upon opposite maxims according to their circumstances. If there is abundance for every body, they are very ready to cry, 'The more the merrier;' if the provision is scanty, they mutter, 'The fewer the better cheer,' and each snatches what he can for himself."

Ella was at this moment distributing the evening meal. At these very words she placed before her son Kenneth a barley-cake,—the first he had tasted for some time,—with a smile which he well understood. He had known something of the sufferings his mother had described as the consequence of their mutual resolution not to touch the food on which they usually subsisted; but, till this evening, he had supposed the trial only begun, and felt almost ashamed to be re-

leased so soon. As he broke his bread, a blush overspread his whole face; and when he next looked up, he met Ella's eyes filled with tears. Mr. Mackenzie observed, but did not understand; and Angus himself would have found it difficult to explain, though Kenneth's altered looks caused a suspicion that he had exercised more than his share of self-denial.

"I have seen so much of the snatching you speak of, and of defrauding too," said Angus, when all but himself and his guest had withdrawn, "as to make me think we are now little better off than in cities, compared with which I used to think our island a paradise. There has, I believe, been crime enough committed within the circuit of a mile from this place, to match with the alleys and cellars of a manufacturing city. The malice of the people in their speech, the envy in their countenances, the artifices in their management, the violence of their actions, are new to this place and these people. I hoped to have kept my children out of sight and hearing of these things for ever."

"Never nourish such a hope, friend," said Mr. Mackenzie, "unless you can keep want out of sight and hearing too. Virtue and vice depend not on place, but on circumstance. The rich do not steal in cities, any more than the starving respect property in a retired island like this. If we could increase our supply of necessaries and comforts in proportion to the wants and reasonable desires of all, there would be little vice; and if we did no more than rightly estimate and

administer the resources we already possess, we might destroy for ever the worst evils of which society complains."

"Surely, Sir, it might be done, if society were but animated with one mind. It is in the power of few, I suppose, to increase the supply of necessaries and comforts perpetually and very extensively; and no power on earth can do it so as to keep pace with the constant demand for them."

"Certainly, if that demand be unchecked."

"I was going to say, Sir, that it is in the power of every one to help to equalize the demand. It seems to me, that whoever acts so as to aggravate want, becomes answerable for the evils caused by want, whether he injures his neighbour's capital, or neglects to improve his own, or increases a demand upon it which is already overwhelming."

"You will be told, friend, if you preach your doctrine to unwilling ears, that one set of vices would rage only the more fiercely for those which result from want being moderated."

"I know," replied Angus, "that some are of opinion that there is always a balance of vices in society; that, as some are extinguished, others arise. This seems to me a fancy that nobody can prove or show to be reasonable."

"I am quite of your opinion, Angus; and if I were not, I am sure I should find it difficult to assert that any set of vices could be more to be dreaded than those which arise from extreme poverty. I would not draw a comparison in

favour of any acknowledged vice over any other; but I can conceive of no more dreadful degradation of character, no more abundant sources of misery, than arise out of the overpowering temptations of want. You have seen instances, I doubt not, among the lower, as I among the higher classes, of the regular process by which honourable feelings are blunted, kindly affections embittered, piety turned into blasphemy, and integrity into fraud and violence, as the pressure of poverty becomes more and more galling.

"I have seen so much of this, Sir, as to make me believe that very few, if any, pass through the trial of squalid and hopeless poverty with healthy minds. Moreover, I believe such poverty to be the hot-bed of *all* vices. I shall never be convinced, unless I see it, that any vice in existence will be aggravated by the comforts of life being extended to all, or that there is any which is not encouraged by the feelings of personal injury, of hatred towards their superiors, or recklessness concerning their companions and themselves, which are excited among the abject or ferocious poor."

"Evil seems to be an admonition of Providence to men to change that part of their conduct which brings on that evil," observed Mr. Mackenzie; "and happy are they who take the warning in time, or remember it for their future guidance. Extensive fires warn men not to build houses of wood; pestilence may teach cleanliness and ventilation; and having thus

given their lesson, these evils become rare, or cease. What, therefore, may famine teach?"

"Care not to let eaters multiply beyond the ordinary supply of food. I hope we people of Garveloch shall take the warning. I am sure it is distinct enough."

"Yes, Angus. You ate up the unusual supply of two abundant seasons. An average one produced hardship. An unfavourable one has brought you to the brink of a famine. This is Providence's way of admonishing."

Chapter IX.

TROUBLES NEVER COME ALONE.

The sufferings of the islanders were not yet over, as all foresaw who were accustomed to watch the succession of events. The natural consequence of a famine in former days was a plague; and it is still too well known in Scotland and Ireland that sickness follows scarcity. Garveloch went through the natural process. There never was such a winter known there as that which succeeded the scarcity. Rheumatism among the aged, consumption among the youthful, all the disorders of infancy among the children, laid waste the habitations of many who thought they had never known sorrow till now.

Many a gray-haired matron, who used to sit plying her distaff in the chimney-corner, and singing old songs to the little ones playing about her, had been shaken by the privations of the summer, and now lay groaning in the torments of the disease which was soon to take her hence, although, with due care, so vigorous a life might still have been preserved for a few years. Here, a father who was anxious to be up and doing for his children, on the sea or at the station, was in danger of coughing his life away if he faced the wintry air, and fretted in idleness within his smoky cottage. There, a mother who had hungered through many a day to feed her children, now found that she had broken down her strength in the effort, and that she must leave them to a care less tender than her own. In other cases, the parent and her little ones seemed hastening together to another world, and two or three of one family were buried in the same grave. The mortality among the children was dreadful. The widow Cuthbert could scarcely believe her own happiness when she saw all her little family daily seated at the board in rosy health and gay spirits, when not a neighbour had been exempt from loss. She would scarcely suffer her boys out of her sight; and if accidentally parted from them, trembled lest she should hear complaints or see traces of illness when she met them again. There had been sickness in Ella's family, but none died after little Jamie. Ronald kept watch over them all. Many were the kind presents, many the welcome indulgences he sent or carried

to the sick members of his sister's and brother's family this year. Katie needed no such assistance. If she had, she would have freely accepted it; but frequent inquiries and much friendly intercourse served quite as well to show the regard these friends bore to each other.

The supplies of food were still so precarious as to make every body anxious except those who could purchase a store. Now and then a boat with provisions came from a distance, and the cod-fishing turned out tolerably productive to those who had health and strength to pursue the occupation. So much was wanted, however, for immediate consumption, that business nearly stood still at the station. Kenneth had been recalled thither when there seemed to be a prospect of employment for him; but he had now made the last barrel that would be wanted before next season, and began to be very melancholy. He sauntered along the pier, around which there was no busy traffic; he lounged about the cooperage, taking up first one tool and then another, and wondering when the hammer and the saw would be heard there again. Many a time did he count the weeks that must pass before he should be once more earning his maintenance, and reckon how large was the debt to his uncle which he was incurring by his present uselessness. Ronald could not succeed in making him cheerful for a day together, or in inducing him to employ himself; and he began to fear that either illness was creeping on the young man, or that his fine spirit was broken by the anxiety h

had undergone and the miseries he had beheld. He would have sent him over to Ella, whose influence was all-powerful with her son; but Ella had cares enough at home just now. Having messages from Kenneth as frequently as usual, she was not more than usually anxious concerning him.

Angus's activity and cheerfulness never gave way. He ascribed their power to his wife's influence; while she found a never-failing support to her energies when he was present. She owned to Katie how easily she could give way to despondency when he was absent for days together, and how she felt strong enough to do and bear anything when his boat came in sight again. The fact was, they did owe to each other all they believed they owed. There was a lofty spirit of trust in Ella, as animating to her husband as his experience in life and devotion to his home were supporting to her. Katie looked with a generous sympathy on the enjoyment of a happiness of which she had been deprived, and wished no more for herself than that she might be as secure from trials with her children as she believed Angus and Ella to be. No sorrows could, she told Ella, be inflicted by the children of such parents—by children so brought up as theirs. Ella never admitted this assurance without reservation; for she knew too much of human life to expect that any one of its blessings should be enjoyed for ever without alloy.

It was during the absence of her husband on one of his trading excursions that the children

came crowding round the door, to ask Ella to come and listen to the new music some gentlemen in fine clothes were playing as they went up the pass. Katie was brought out by her little people at the same moment. The children climbed the height to get another view of the strangers, and their mothers followed. A recruiting party was ascending between the rocks at the same moment that more companies than one were leaving the burying-ground. The children clapped their hands and began to dance to the booming drum and the shrill fife; but Ella immediately stopped them.

"Don't ye mark," she said, "there's Rob and Meg Murdoch coming down the hill? Would ye like to see anybody dancing in your sight when you have just laid your father's head in the ground?"

"I saw Rob drunk this very morn, mother, and he danced as if his father had been there looking on."

"If Rob behaves as if he had no feeling, that is no reason why you should seem to think he has none."

"Look at Meg!" cried another child. "She is laughing as if it was a bridal instead of a funeral."

Ella was shocked, though not much surprised, to see Meg run forward to meet the soldiers, as if they were old acquaintance, and linger behind with them when her party, including her stupid brother, had cracked their joke and passed on. It occurred to her that Meg's brother-in-law

might be among the soldiers and she said so by way of excuse; but immediately called the children down from the height, unwilling that such an example of unfeeling levity should remain before their eyes. They were naturally somewhat unwilling to lose sight of the scarlet coats, having never beheld any before.

"Ye will see such often enough, now, my dears," said their mother, sighing. "These people know how to choose their time. The fife is ever merriest when the heart's music is hushed; and whenever people are at their wit's end with want and sorrow, the red-coats come and carry away such as are glad to drown thought and seek change instead of waiting for it."

"Yes, indeed," replied Katie: "a funeral at the top of the hill, and a recruiting party going to meet it, is natural enough; and so it would have been to see lads made to drink in the king's name when their stomachs were craving food. I wondered we had had no recruiting before; for the worse the times, the more are ready to leave home behind them, and go and serve the king."

The children understood nothing of all this but that they should see the soldiers again, which indeed was the point which most concerned them at their age. They listened long for the drum—they took turns as scouts to watch which way the soldiers went, and to give notice if they should approach. Now they were traced up to Duff's farm, heard to play before the

door, and seen to be invited in. After a while, they proceeded with a few followers at their heels, by a roundabout way to the Murdochs' cove. Meg was their guide, walking in front, arm-in-arm with a soldier—a fashion of marching to which it was supposed she had been just drilled. The music being heard approaching behind the rocks, the children scampered off to meet it; and after a considerable time, during which shouts arose which made the mothers wish their boys at home again, the children appeared as the advanced guard of the procession, waving their bonnets, and pretending to march like the grand folks behind them. It was soon apparent that all present were not as happy as they. Meg indeed laughed so as to be heard above the music, and one or two raw lads looked full of pride and heroism, and took off their bonnets from time to time to look at the gay ribbons with which they were ornamented; but all the bustle and noise—nothing remarkable perhaps in an English city, but very astonishing in Garveloch—could not call off attention from a woman's rage, or drown the screams of a woman's scolding voice. The vixen was Noreen; and if ever a vixen had an excuse for her violence, it was she at this moment; for Dan, the husband for whom she had, as she declared, left the beautifullest home of the beautifullest country in the world—Dan, whom she had defended through thick and thin, for having "kilt" her and "murthered" her "babbies,"—Dan, who had said so often that a man needed nothing in

life more than a cabin and a potato-ground, and an "iligant" wife, had enlisted, and was going to leave her and her last remaining child to starve. Had not he a cabin? she wanted to know; and had not he a potato-ground, as good as any at Rathmullin? and had not he called her his "iligant Noreen" before the fancy came across him to break her heart?

Since it did not please Dan to answer her questions, no one else was bound to do so. It was difficult to say whether he was drunk or not. He kissed his wife in return for her cuffs, and behaved like a madman; but such was his way when he was roused to mirth.

Shocked at the sight, Ella was about to withdraw, when Katie expressed her wonder whether this scene was to be acted in all the islands. She had connexions in more than one, and began to be anxious lest some of them should be tempted to go abroad. Ella therefore accosted the sergeant, a goodnatured-looking man, and asked if his recruiting was likely to be prosperous among the islands? He found the people very loyal, he replied, and many fine young men ready to serve their king and country. He should visit every place in the district in turn, and had already made a pretty wide circuit. He had this morning come from Islay.

"You would scarce enlist many there," observed Ella. "A few months ago would have been your best time for Islay; now the fishery begins to open a prospect again."

"I beg your pardon, madam; we have been

particularly successful in Islay." And he pulled out a list of names, displayed it hastily, and was about to put it up again, when Katie snatched it, and after the first glance looked at her friend with such a gaze of anguish as at once told Ella the truth.

"Is Kenneth's name there?" she asked, in a low, hoarse voice.

"That young man," said the sergeant, who had been speaking to one of his people, and did not perceive Ella's emotion, "that young man to whose name you point—and a very fine youth he is, six feet and half an inch—belongs to this place. He is to come over this afternoon to take leave of his family, and proceeds with me in the morning."

Ella retreated hastily towards her own door; she turned round on reaching the threshold, and motioned to Katie not to follow her; but Katie would not be repulsed. With streaming eyes she attempted to make her way by gentle force. Ella recovered her power of speech.

"Leave me, Katie. I can speak to no one but Angus. O Angus! why are you away? O! how shall I tell the news when he comes back?"

When Katie had led her friend into the inner room, she left her to her grief, thinking that the best kindness was to keep watch that no one intruded. The widow felt as if her own heart was bursting when audible tokens once or twice reached her of the fearful conflict which rent the mother's heart. In the fervour of her love and compassion for Ella, she was full of indignation

against him who had caused all this misery; and when this indignation had reached its highest pitch, the latch of the door was uplifted, and Kenneth stood before her. His pale countenance, with its expression of mournful determination, might have disarmed her anger at a moment of less excitement; but Katie would not bestow on him a second glance or a greeting.

"Where is my mother?" he inquired. "My father, I find, is absent."

"Seek her yourself," replied Katie, pointing to the chamber. "If you did not fear to wring her heart, you will scarce shrink from seeing her grief."

"She knows then!" said Kenneth. "I would fain have told her myself——"

"You need not covet the task," replied Katie, her features working convulsively. "You would have cast yourself into the sea before now if you had seen her take the tidings." And the widow gave vent to what was boiling in her mind.

Kenneth did not at first interrupt her; and when he attempted explanation, was not allowed to proceed. Katie had never before been so unreasonable as now on her friend's behalf.

"Make way!" said Kenneth, at length, in strong emotion. "My mother will hear me."

Ella at this moment threw open the door of the chamber, and stood, still trembling but erect, and spoke calmly.

"Katie!" she said, "I thought you had known Kenneth and me better. He has ever been dutiful: why then condemn him unheard?

I have told you my confidence in him; and is it kind, then, to make a mockery of my trust?"

Katie's anger was now all turned against herself. She cast an imploring look at them both, and rushed out of the house before they could detain her.

"Bless you, mother, for trusting me!" cried Kenneth.

"But O, my boy, what a sore trial to my trust! What has possessed ye, Kenneth, that ye must leave us? When we have suffered together so long, and were beginning to hope together again, what could make ye plunge us into a new trouble?"

"It was hastily done, mother, but done for the best, and not from discontent with home, or a love of wandering. I could not see so clearly as you that times are about to mend. I could not endure to be a burden to uncle Ronald, and my heart was sick with hoping and hoping, and finding nothing to do after all. Then there are so many brothers growing up to fill my place; and my going will make room for one of them at the station. And then there was the bounty too. I thought I should have had pleasure, mother, in giving you the first purse of money I ever had; but nothing will give me any pleasure again if you think I have been wilfully wrong."

"Not wilfully wrong, Kenneth; I never thought you could be that—not even in the first moment when——"

She could not proceed. Her son continued:

"I would fain hear ye say more, mother. O, can ye tell me that you think me right?"

"Do not let it weigh with you, my son, whether I think you judged rightly or not, You felt dutifully and kindly, and you have as much right to judge of your duty as I. You shall never want my blessing nor your father's. It is to your wish to do your duty that we give our blessing; and it will therefore follow you over the world."

Kenneth had much to say on duty to one's country, and on the question who could best be spared to serve in her armies; in the pursuit of which argument he brought the proof round to himself. His mother, feeling that the deed could not be undone, encouraged his feelings of patriotism, sanctioned his desire to fulfil a public duty, and contented herself with the silence of dissent when she thought him mistaken.

"Mother," cried Kenneth, at length, bursting into tears, "you make a child of me by treating me like a man. I knew you would be patient, I knew you would be indulgent, but I scarcely hoped that even you could so soon, so very soon, give me the rights I have been so hasty to claim. If you had blamed me, if you had spoken with authority, I could have commanded myself better when it comes to the last."

"We are all weak," murmured Elfa,, melting also into tears. "God forbid we should judge one another! We are least of all fit to do so when our griefs are tossing so as to wreck our judgments. Authority, Kenneth! No; this is

not the time for me to use it. If it were merely whether ye should cross to Islay to-day or to-morrow, I might have spoken unawares with authority; but when the question is, what your duty in life is to be, and when that question is already decided, all that a mother can do is to give her blessing."

The many dreary hours of this night were too few for what had to be said and done by the elder members of this mourning family. Soon after daybreak Angus returned; so that Kenneth had not the additional misery of departing in uncertainty whether he should be followed by his father's blessing. Angus had in his young days been sent abroad by a spirit of adventure; so that he was even better prepared than Ella to sympathise in Kenneth's feelings and convictions. He commanded himself when the event was first told him; accompanied his son to a considerable distance; and from the hour of his return spoke to none but Ella of the blank the wanderer's absence caused, or of the anxiety with which he watched for tidings of the war.

Chapter X.

CONCLUSION.

A RECRUITING party was, as Ella had foretold, a frequent sight in Garveloch as long as the distress lasted; and one of the present conse-

quences to her and her husband of the favourable season which followed was, that the red-coats ceased to appear, and the hated sound of the drum and fife to make them start. As soon as the fishery was resumed, there was work enough for all who remained on the island, and therefore little encouragement to serve the king out of his own dominions. News of Kenneth came very rarely—about as often as rejoicings for a victory. Some of Angus's neighbours were wont to come and tell him of such events as if they were certain of bringing welcome news, provided he knew that his son was safe. Fergus's lads, especially, who regretted that they were too young to enlist at the same time with Kenneth, seemed disposed to take the first opportunity of doing so that might occur, and to have no doubt that the best service they could render to their island was to leave it.

"How can you suppose," said Angus to them one day, "that I can rejoice in the slaughter you tell me of? How can you imagine it can give me pleasure to look forward to our strong youths leaving our shores?"

"I thought, uncle," said one—"I am sure I heard somebody say you believed that we wanted thinning, and that war must therefore be a very good thing."

"I said so," said Captain Forbes, who stood within hearing. "You think, Angus, that there are too many people for the supply of food; and therefore the more that die, the better cheer there is for those who remain. Did you not tell Mr. Mackenzie so?"

"Better say at once, sir, that we ought to pray for a pestilence. Better send for our enemies to slaughter us as fast as they can, sparing only a proper number to enjoy what we leave behind."

"But I am sure you used to complain of our numbers, Angus, and ascribe our distress to them."

"But it does not follow, sir, that I would have them removed by violence. All I wish is, that society should be as happy as it can be made; and it would be somewhat strange to inflict the extremest misery with this view. I never had such a thought, I assure you, as of running into a greater evil to avoid a lesser."

"Many people, however, think occasional wars and plagues very good things to keep down the population."

"So I have heard, but I think very differently. The one circumstance which, above all others, cheers me respecting the state of society, is that population is, to a considerable extent, checked by better means than formerly. There are fewer lives lost by war, plagues, and the accidents of common life, while the increase of population is not in proportion to the removal of these dreadful checks."

"How do you account for this?"

"Marriage is less general, and takes place at a later age—at least among the middling classes, whose example will, I trust, be soon followed by their poorer neighbours. Whenever any one

class gains a clear understanding of the reasons why a thing has been, and why it should no longer be, there is room for hope that other classes will in time enter into their views, and act accordingly. There is hope that governments will in time cease to make war and encourage population,—that is, to call people into existence for the purpose of cutting one another's throat. There is hope that the poor will in time be more eager to maintain than to multiply their families; and then, lads, there will be no more drumming and fifing in Garveloch, and no need to wander abroad in search of danger and death, in order to show patriotism."

"When will that be, uncle?"

"I am no prophet; but I will venture to prophesy that it will happen somewhere between the third and the thirty-thousandth generation from the present—that is, that it will take place, but not yet."

"You have said a great deal," observed the captain, "about the reasons why there should no longer be want; but you slipped quietly enough over the reason why there has ever been want."

"It was not my intention to do so," said Angus, smiling, "for it appears very clear to me. It was growing need which urged men towards all the improvements which have ever taken place. The appropriation and security of property, improvements in government, art, and

sciences—in short, all the institutions of society took their beginning from the growing wants of men; and those growing wants were caused, of course, by increase of numbers. This is quite enough to satisfy us that the principle of increase is a good one; while, if we see that our institutions can now be preserved and improved under other and higher kinds of stimulus, it is time that we were controlling the principle within the bounds of reason and happiness."

"It is done for us when we do not look to it ourselves," the captain replied, sighing as he cast a glance around him. "How full is the burying-ground,—how empty are the houses compared with what they were but a few months ago! It reminds me of some of the places in the east, where we were ordered to march in the rear of the plague. They will soon be filled again, if the fishery does well. That is a comfort."

"And it reminds me that I have no time to lose," observed Angus. "Will you be my passenger to the station, captain?"

Nobody had time to lose this season in the island, but those who were willing to run the risk of future scarcity. Labour was in great request, and, of course, well paid. Angus found ample employment for his crane, and received very good interest for the capital laid out upon it. His younger sons worked it with as much zeal as Kenneth had shown in its construction; but their father, proud as he was of them, thought in his inmost heart that no other of his flourishing tribe equalled the eldest, or could make up for

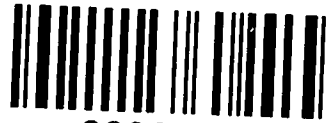
his loss; and the haunting dream of the night, the favourite vision of the day, was of Kenneth's return, to leave his native land no more. This was Angus's meditation while plying the oar, and this his theme in his own chimney corner. It was much to hear of Kenneth's honour and welfare, but while no hope of peace came with the tidings, they were not perfectly satisfying.

The only person to whom the improvement in the times brought any trouble was the widow Cuthbert. Her former lovers—not Ronald, but those who had broken off acquaintance with her when her young family seemed a dead weight in the scale against her own charms—now returned, and were more earnest than ever in their suit. Katie had discretion enough to be aware that the only respect in which she had become a more desirable match than before was in the growth of her boys, whose labour might soon be a little fortune to her, if she chose so to employ it. She was therefore far from being flattered at becoming so much in request, and honoured and valued the disinterested friendship of Ronald more than ever.

The present time, even with the drawback of Kenneth's absence, was the happiest period of Ronald's life. He made his little home at the station sociable and comfortable, by gathering his nephews and nieces about him; and his visits to Garveloch became more frequent and more welcome continually when his prosperous business allowed him leisure for the trip. Fergus, weighed down with care, had grown old before

his time; and to Ronald's assistance it was owing that his family preserved their respectability till the lads were able to take on themselves a part of the charge which had been too heavy for their father.

Ella was the last of the family to show the marks of change. Her mind and heart were as remarkable for their freshness in age as they had been for their dignity in youth. Inured to early exertion and hardship, she was equal to all calls upon her energies of body and spirit. She was still seen, as occasion required, among the rocks, or on the sea, or administering her affairs at home. She was never known to plead infirmity, or to need forbearance, or to disappoint expectation. She had all she wanted in her husband's devotion to her and to his home, and she distributed benefits untold from the rich treasury of her warm affections. She had, from childhood, filled a station of authority, and had never abused her power, but made it the means of living for others. Her power increased with every year of her life, and with it grew her scrupulous watchfulness over its exercise, till the same open heart, penetrating eye, and ready hand, which had once made her the sufficient dependence of her orphan brothers, gave her an extensive influence over the weal and woe of Garveloch.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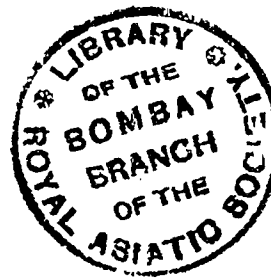

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on 10 February, 2016